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IMAGINE™

Adventure Games Magazine

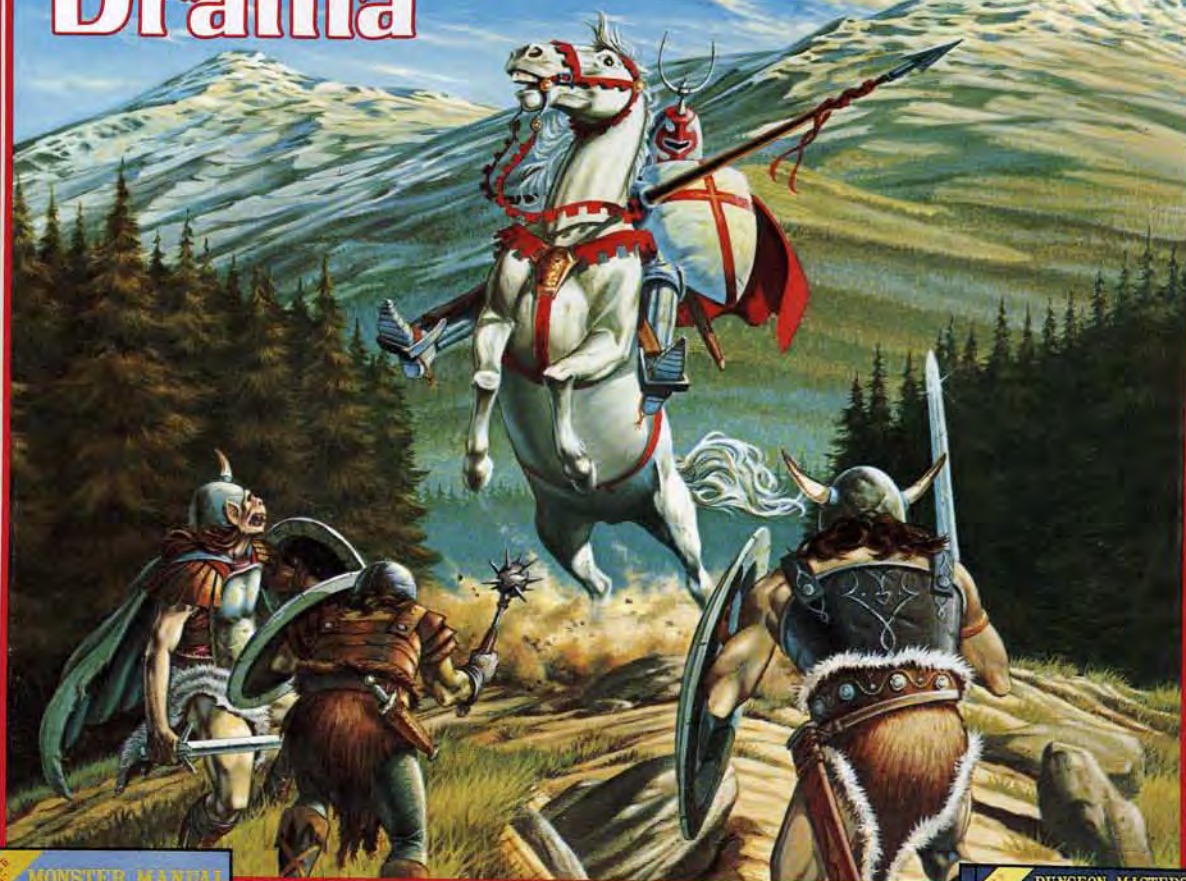
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IMAGINE™



Editorial

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You will have seen from the letters columns in issues 2 and 3 that there is still some lack of understanding about the aims of this magazine. I have a strange mixture of feelings about this. Sadness that some of our friends still feel that they are not being catered for and joy that so many people not only like the magazine but are being introduced into the adventure gaming world and indeed into the ranks of the Players Association.

All you experienced players who are concerned about there being too many basic details in this magazine should be delighted that we allocate space to the newcomer, for he or she keeps the hobby alive and, with time, they too will develop into experienced players.

We do, also, need to provide space for advanced players and from those features all you who are newcomers can get a whiff of things to come.

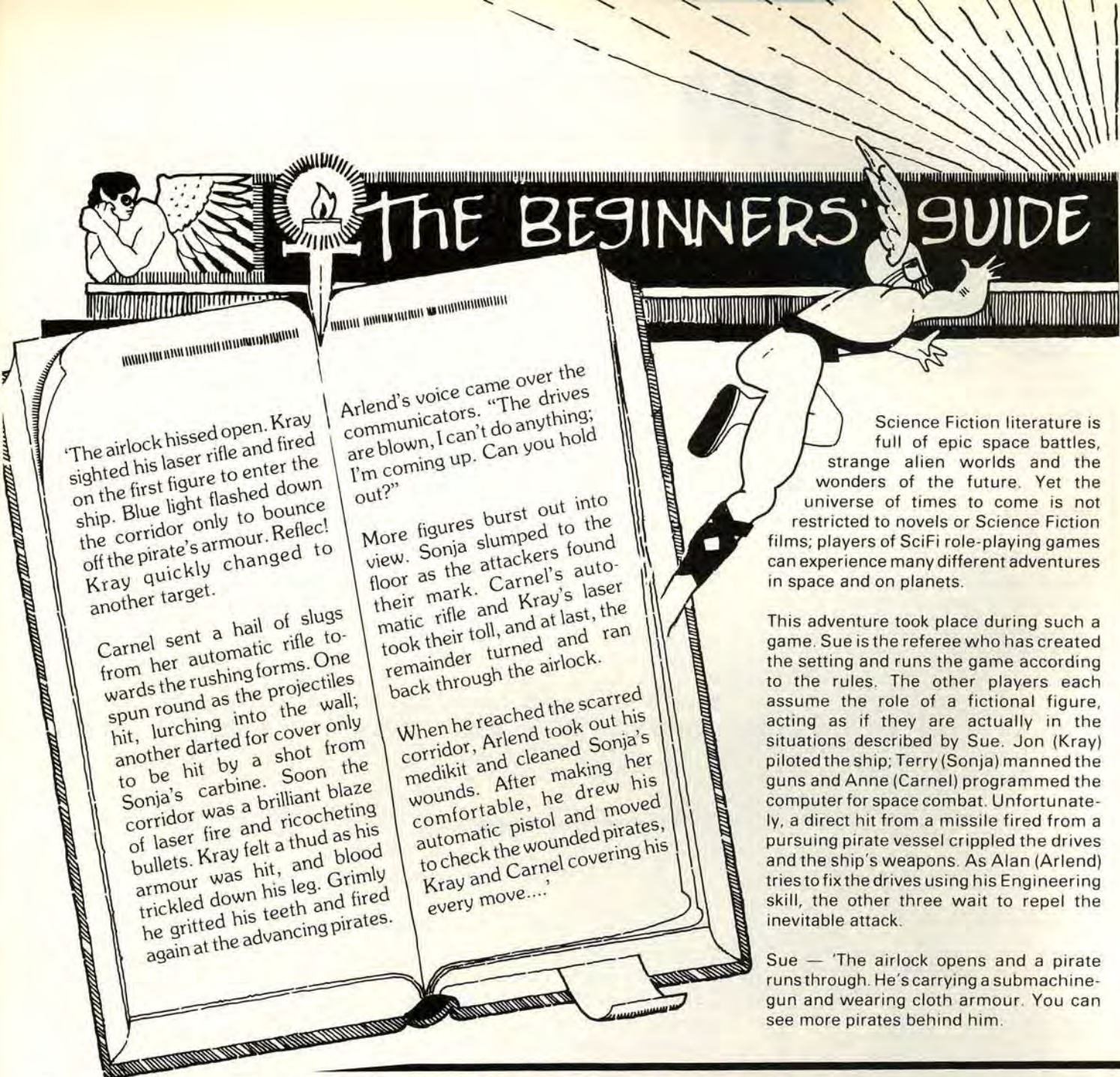
We hope that you will ALL enjoy the new fiction in the magazine, the Sword of Alabron cartoon adventure and the subtleties of Rubic. We try to please all of you all of the time and we shall keep trying.

There is a whole new expansion of the hobby going on and IMAGINE™ magazine is designed to help it thrive — come with us.

 **Keith Thomson**

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Jon — 'I'm firing my laser rifle at him.'

Anne — 'I've set my auto-rifle to Full Automatic. I'll take the second one.'

Terry — 'I'm ready to shoot the third.'

Sue — 'OK. Roll 2d6 and add your weapons skill to the total.'

Jon — 'Nine, plus two for my skill, makes eleven altogether.'

Sue checks Jon's score on a special combat table. Jon's target is wearing reflec armour, which is very effective against laser fire. Even with an eleven, Jon misses.

Jon — 'Next time I'll fire at a different one!'

Anne's automatic rifle, set on Full Automatic, fires four shots per pull of the trigger, greatly increasing her chances of hitting. She scores a hit and now rolls three dice to determine the extent of the damage. Sue checks the result against the pirates' statistics and sees that the pirate is seriously wounded and out of action. Anne's auto rifle also gives her a

chance of hitting additional characters at reduced odds. She misses, but Terry successfully hits and wounds one with her carbine.

Sue — 'The remaining six pirates are advancing down the corridor, firing as they move.'

Sue rolls two dice for the pirates. Jon is hit, but the damage is not enough to knock him out, so he continues firing. Unfortunately, Terry is not so lucky and she collapses, unconscious. Alan has meanwhile been working on the drives. Sue rolls two dice and adds Alan's Engineering skill; the result is insufficient.'

Sue — 'Alan, you realise that you won't be able to fix the drives without the use of a starport's facilities.'

Alan — 'I'll run to the airlock and join the fight.'

Sue — 'It will take you a while to get there. Jon and Anne, it's your turn to fire again.'

Jon — 'I've only rolled a six....'

Sue — 'You hit him, this one isn't wearing Reflec. Throw five dice for damage!'

John rolls twenty-four, instantly killing the pirate. Anne hits and wounds two pirates, leaving only three. Sue now makes a morale check for the pirates, the result being that they fail and flee back to their own ship.

Sue — 'Alan, you arrive just as the pirates retreat.'

Alan — 'Using my Medical skill, I'm going to clean and bandage Terry's wounds. Do I think she's going to be alright?'

Sue — 'She's only lightly wounded and will regain consciousness soon.'

Alan — 'I'm taking out my automatic pistol, and going to see if there's anything I can do for the wounded pirates.'

Jon — 'I'll fire at anything that comes through the airlock.'

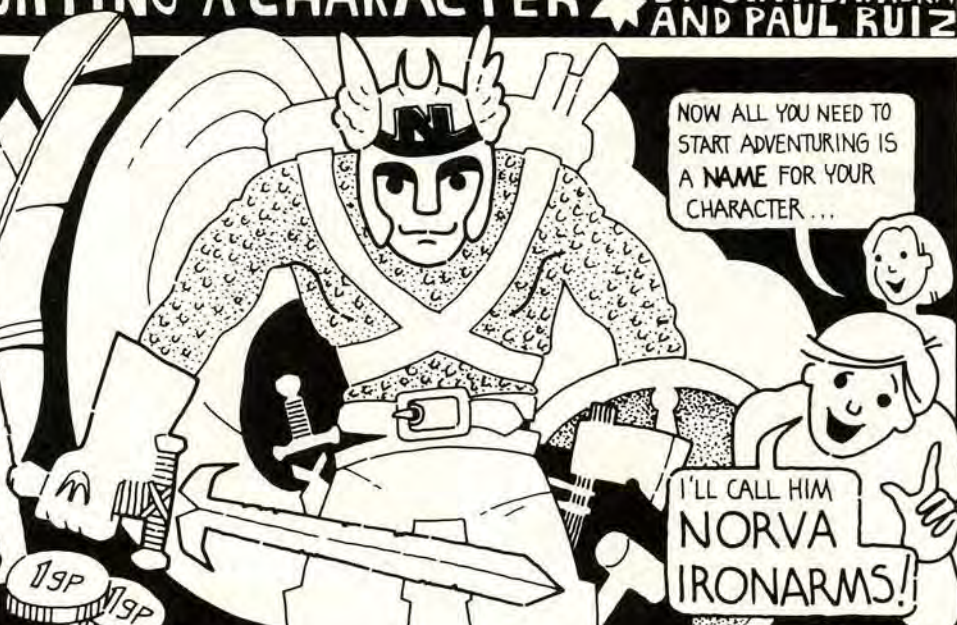
Anne — 'So will I.'

Alan — 'Right, let's look at the first one....'

Jim Bamba

PART FOUR - EQUIPPING A CHARACTER ★ BY JIM BAMBRA AND PAUL RUIZ

equipment	gold pieces
chain mail armour	40
shield	10
sword	10
hand axe	4
dagger	3
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iron rations (preserved food)	15
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1 quart of wine	1
tinderbox	3
6 torches	1
12 iron spikes	2
small hammer	2
large sack	2
total	98



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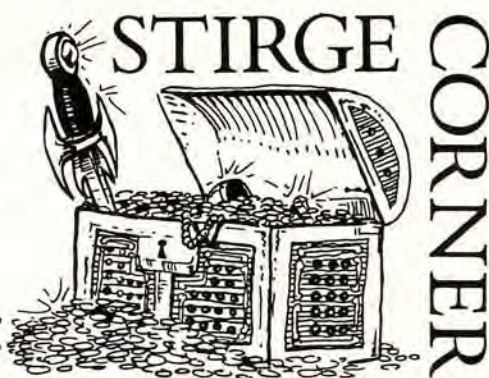
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**The miners call their mine
'haunted' and refuse to work,
the owner doesn't believe them
and threatens the ringleaders....
and then, enter the players.**



Things are much easier for the novice player of the D&D® game than they are for the novice DM. As a player, the novice can always trail along at the rear of the party, keeping out of trouble, going along with the ideas of the more experienced members of the party, and gradually taking in what to do and what not to do when down a dungeon. How much harder it is for the novice dungeonmaster! He's in the thick of it all immediately: decisions, decisions, decisions.

It is certainly very useful for someone who intends to DM to gain experience as a player before chancing an arm at the dungeonmastering art, but if you are trying to start a group in South Uist or somewhere, that may not be possible, and *someone* has to take the plunge into refereeing first.

Challenge

The temptation, when taking on the challenge for the first time, is to let someone else do much of the hard work by buying a pre-designed module and running that, thus avoiding all the work of drawing up a dungeon. Personally, I don't think this is really the best idea. The trouble is that, if you're running someone else's dungeon, you may be hazy on most of the important details unless you've studied the material in great detail. If the party chances upon a non-player character of some importance and stops to converse, you may be forced into an irritating search through paragraph upon paragraph of fine print looking for the character synopsis, eventually finding that the character concerned is 'motivated solely by unswerving loyalty to Pavel Borjkovec' and then you have to search frantically through yet more sheafs of paper trying to find out who Pavel Borjkovec is. Meanwhile your players are playing noughts and crosses on the margins of their character sheets.

On the other hand, if you have designed the dungeon yourself, the details (the important ones anyway) will be etched upon your mind by reason of the effort that went into creating them.

Another problem is that the commercially available scenarios tend to be complicated, with lots of details (they wouldn't be worth the money otherwise), and this

doesn't make things easier for the out-and-out beginner. However, these scenarios and modules are still very valuable to the beginner, but for a different reason. They give an excellent guide to the sort of ideas that a DM can use in designing a dungeon; they can be a source of tricks, traps, puzzles, themes and ideas which can be plundered wholesale by the novice designer.

So fear not. Take up your graph paper and pencil (incidentally, it's worth scouring the shops for graph paper with 1/10" squares — the metric stuff is horrible for the D&D game). First you need a basic

idea or theme for your creation — in other words a plot for the story in which your players will be characters. It could be something like this: a disused working in a gold mine runs close to an unknown ancient catacomb. After a rock fall, a connection between the two opens up, and undead start wandering the mine. The miners call the mine haunted and refuse to work; the mine owner doesn't believe them and makes threats against those he feels are the ringleaders. A riot is in the offing.... enter the players.

Now you can start drawing up plans of the mine, and of the catacomb, locating the undead and the other monsters that may have crept in here and there, putting some ancient 'grave goods' in the tunnels for treasure, scattering the odd gold nugget around, deciding where the main gold deposits are, and so on.

The catacomb area would have provision for special features that might be based on features taken from other scenarios, if you find it hard to invent your own. Remember, since your players are novices too, it may be necessary to water down traps that were designed principally to challenge more experienced players.

'I suppose that's it.'

Consider also, that you are going to want at least some player-characters to survive their adventure, if possible (though if the players are determined to kill themselves off, they'll do it). It may seem like a good idea at the time to have a big trap-door, that lets players fall down into a pool of boiling hydrofluoric acid, but do you really want to have to announce, 'Oh dear. You've all just fallen to your deaths.' (silence) 'Well, I suppose that's it.'

The important thing is to learn from your mistakes. If you find that characters are

A page for the
not-so-experienced
adventurer

by Roger Musson

getting killed off too often, well, perhaps you have been putting in too many monsters. Go through your sheets and trim down those twenty ghouls in the next room to a more reasonable figure, say, two. Conversely, if folk are having too easy a time of it, then perhaps you need to revise things in the other direction, perhaps by exchanging those monsters for something one hit dice stronger.

The ideal to aim for is to make the game a challenge — not so easy that it's a pushover, but not so hard as to be impossible. Monitor your own performance. If you find that you are veering away from the middle course towards either extreme, then take corrective action.

Roger Musson

Roger will be back next month, with more advice for inexperienced players. New readers should note that back issues of IMAGINE™ magazine contain more helpful hints from Roger, covering subjects such as the nature of RPGs (issue 1), on 'winning' (issue 2) and on open-ended rules (issue 3). These back issues are available direct from TSR for £1.50 each.

ALTERNATIVE

The hobby of Fantasy Roleplaying Games (or Rolegaming, as it is also called) has truly come of age. No longer an esoteric activity pursued solely by misfit students in dingy, smoke-filled rooms, the hobby is on the threshold of public recognition and acceptance. But have the games and the styles of play *also* matured? Looking around at conventions, the main thrust of the game still seems, broadly speaking, to be killing monsters and acquiring treasure. Surely the hobby has more to offer than this? Once you have had your fill of massacring innocent monsters, and reached 20th level (or higher!), what is there to do?

There have been many articles printed elsewhere aiming to answer this question — suggesting political intrigue, exploring alternative planes of existence and even (dare I mention it?) Roleplaying — as more interesting activities for players suffering from this 'burnout' syndrome. I would like to present some new, and perhaps less obvious approaches.

To a large proportion of rolegamers, the sole purpose of the hobby is to provide them with *fun*. There is nothing wrong with this, and the fun derived is often more creative than, for example, watching television. However, there is no reason why roleplaying cannot be educational and thought-provoking at the same time. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved, and implementing them can greatly extend the duration of interest in the game as well as providing entertainment.

Educational Potential

The educational potential of roleplaying has already been realised — especially in the fields of History and Psychology. Whilst it will undoubtedly take many years for the use of roleplaying games to become a widespread teaching method in schools, there is no reason why young roleplayers cannot start increasing the educational value of the game themselves. This could be of immediate use to the gamers — parents will be more sympathetic towards the game (and who knows? might just feel inclined to buy their children that rather expensive play-aid if they feel that they might learn something from it), and teachers might be more prepared to give their assistance to a roleplaying project.

The most obvious way of deriving this kind of benefit is to attempt to simulate an actual historical environment. Of course, this has the immediate problem that armies of orcs, trolls and the like have not been over-common at any stage in our



history. If you are not prepared to ditch them in your quest for enlightenment then it would be best to have a 'What if...?' campaign.

A 'What if...?' campaign is centred around some important historical event, and is based on the premise that it somehow did not work out in the same way as history records it. For example, a campaign set in England in the early Middle Ages could be based on the premise 'What if William the Conqueror had lost the Battle of Hastings?', or a campaign set in America at the same time could be 'What if the Viking settlements in Vinland had successfully overcome the native Indians?'. In an imaginative campaign of this sort, it would be possible to also suppose the existence of legendary monsters (not too many, mind you!) to spice your adventures up.

In any kind of historical campaign, benefit can be derived from two main sources:

- i) **Research:**
In setting up an accurate historical campaign, young Game Moderators can pick up very useful skills. They will have to deal with quite an array of library textbooks to achieve any degree of accuracy, and so will learn how to read and assimilate data from various sources.
- ii) **Understanding Motives:**
If the players in an historical campaign are placed in a milieu which is reasonably true to history, then they

will gain an insight into ancient/medieval/renaissance thinking far greater than that achieved simply by reading books. Why did the feudal baron think the way he did? Find out a bit about the subject, and then *be* a feudal baron — you'll soon be able to answer this question!

Other areas in which rolegaming can educate include Mathematics (one possible excuse for using a highly complex combat system), Geography (try designing geographically plausible campaign maps — complete with weather patterns), Biology (ever thought about what all those monsters feed on?).

The final educational use I will mention is that of computers. Many gamers are also especially interested in computers, and what better way is there of developing a scholar's flowcharting and programming skills than to efficiently design and implement a character generation (or other, equally useful) programme.

Logic

The potential of RPGs for mental stimulation has been exploited to a limited extent already. Puzzles and riddles are now an established aspect of most dungeons. The major problem with items of this kind, however, is that they may not have any good reason for existing. If Games Moderators wish to keep their campaigns believable and thus conducive to roleplaying, they will have to find puzzles that

GAMESTYLES

by Paul Mason

fit in logically. Probably the most appealing problem to present to players is a crime to solve — since this can lead to a climactic fight in a most satisfying way. Other tests for players' logical reasoning tend to seem contrived in most circumstances. A case can be argued for melee being a test of ingenuity and logic. In most games systems, a well-ordered and tactically sound group can have considerable success in melee. The only problem with this is that treating RPGs as personalised wargames can reduce the pleasures obtainable through role-playing.

Psychology

Role-playing has been used for a number of years as a psychological device, and useful insights can be gained into a number of issues from employing it in this way. Few gamers, however, seem to employ their hobby for anything more than as a release for all their pent-up frustrations, through butchering monsters. No connection has been made between the two ways in which role-playing is used — and this is a pity, because the two approaches have much to offer each other.

In psychology the role-playing is on a purely conversational level — identification with the role being played is far greater than in gaming, since for the duration of the exercise, the participant *is* the character being played, with no need to bother about rules or anything. The difference with gaming is the introduction of rules. As noted above, rules do inhibit

iii) Rules may give some pleasure *in themselves*. For example, an elegant combat system can give pleasure to the players purely because it works well as a game. This appreciation of a rules system (which mainly derives from the hobby of wargaming) can add, rather than detract, from the atmosphere of the game as a whole.

By doing a little research into alternative uses of role-playing, a gaming group can use their hobby to discover more about themselves, their attitudes and opinions.

Clarifying Opinions

'The slender Elf approached the bar. As he did so, a burly axe-wielding human accosted him: "We don't want any pointy-eared scum in *this* Inn! Beat it, before I rearrange your guts!"'

How often has this kind of scene been enacted in rolegames? How often do the players involved actually think about what is happening? For this demonstrates racism little different to that so rife in our society. RPGs can be viewed as escapism; alternatively they can be seen as reflections of the players' attitudes and opinions. Many players who would consider themselves fairminded, non-racist citizens can display frightening prejudices and violence in their role-playing.

In my opinion, a gaming group can often gain something from having an objective look at their role-playing, and seeing what it reveals about themselves. One

oppression, terrorism, poverty — these can all be examined from different sides.

I may have given the impression that my ideal is to have players playing perfect, fair-minded characters only. This is not true. Another interesting exercise is to role-play a character whose morals and ideals you despise utterly.

Overview

In this article I have tried to show that there is more than one way of approaching Roleplaying Games. An immense amount of fun can be generated by giving alternative gamestyles a try — it isn't difficult. You don't need to rewrite your rules, or radically alter your campaign milieu, all it needs is a little imagination, and you wouldn't be in the hobby if you weren't imaginative already. While you are enjoying yourself you can also be stimulating the old grey matter. Role playing is such a young hobby, there is always room for an unorthodox approach.

Be a trailblazer — you won't regret it!

Paul Mason

'All it needs is a little imagination!'

association with the character being played — and this is why many players prefer simple abstract rules rather than very detailed systems. Rules do have several advantages, however:

- i) In a role-playing session which does not use rules, the strength of personality of the *player* will have a significant effect on their relationships. With the addition of rules, this inaccuracy can be reduced, since the Game Moderator will be able to adjudicate situations with more control.
- ii) Ruleless role-playing cannot deal properly with any kind of activity — this explains why most role-playing in a psychological context takes the form of a static discussion between people, rather than the freedom of action occurring in a game.

good way of doing this is to tape-record sessions — listening to the session over again can be revealing, as well as fun. Once you have taken a look at yourself reflected through your gaming, you can start deciding whether it might be worthwhile trying to change your attitudes.

For example, if you were the burly fighter I described in the scenario above, you could try role-playing the Elf in the next session of gaming. Then you will run into the same kind of racism that you were displaying with your previous character. With any luck, you can make the connection between the fantasy world and the real world, and you may feel you understand a little more of the plight of ethnic minorities in a multi-racial society.

Racism is not the only subject that role-playing games can show up. Religion,



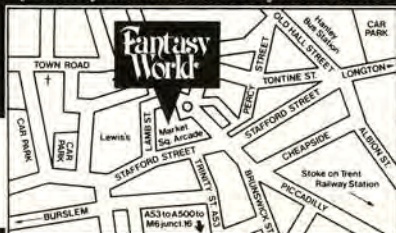
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Deagan, Fenn and Corbane were standing on the top of the broad terraced steps above the Ballroom of Fomalhaut 5's Official Residence, diffidently commenting on the costumed dancers swirling to the exotic music of the extensively programmed android musicians. They had identified everyone there and were bored. Consequently they were in both an excellent position and a receptive mood to see the girl emerge through the open garden doors. Her sparkling mist of a gown scintillated against the darkness behind her.

'Fardles! What a party-crasher!' exclaimed Corbane, eyes widening appreciatively.

'What a costume!' said Deagan, wondering just how that shifting mist of pastel light was generated. She was covered from neck to ankle, shoulder to waist, with a haze hiding all but her eyes and her streaming black hair. Further, the mechanism was very sophisticated for the shades shifted from opacity to transparency in a tantalizing random fashion that showed that she wore absolutely nothing under her hazy attire.

Before they could move towards her, a tall man in the garb of an ancient Terran diplomat, his black and white an excellent foil for her pale shimmers, had bowed and formally led her amidst the dance in progress.

'Wouldn't you know Walteron would be on the prowl and in the right place?' Cordane was disgusted. 'He's the only one ever wears such a confining rig, isn't he, Deagan?'

'But what's he doing here?' asked Fenn before Deagan could answer. 'I heard he had trouble at his mines: cave-ins and a massive displacement.'

'He came in to apply to Father,' said Deagan, son of the Planetary Manager, 'for permission to import a soil mechanics expert from Aldebaran.'

'And nabs the only interesting female here? Usually he takes to the Streets as soon as he's done his duty dance with your mother.'

'He's always had good timing,' said Deagan, amused.

'And bad intentions,' Corbane glowered. 'If he tries to Street her...'

This was Touch-Down Time, when the citizens of the bustling, prosperous planet of Fomalhaut Five, rich in the trans-uranics, the actinides, so vital as energy fuels to extend the surge of colonization to every habitable planet in the spiral of the Milky Way, relaxed industry and inhibitions in a three-day spectacular of day-long contests of all athletic sorts and night-long dancing, eating and carousing.

The Official Residence, a sprawling complex of domes, residential, diplomatic and business, was the traditional site of special festivities to which the descendants of the original First Landing Families congregated from their distant domains. The more important off-world visitors, city and spaceports officials were added to this exclusive gathering. As it was conducted on more sedate lines it held little glamour for those wanting to sample exotic pleasures available in the Street's celebrations. Occasionally a brash, young newcomer male, hoping to favourably impress a Domain Family daughter, took advantage of the Celebrations' licence and appeared at the Residence. So long as the person behaved with propriety acceptable to the Residence, he was permitted to stay. A few nights' dancing was hardly sufficient time to form a



lasting alliance with the shrewdly raised young women of Fomalhaut. But it was rare indeed for a woman to put herself in such an equivocal position.

'She could be from one of the newer Domains? They work so hard they don't usually attend Touch Down,' said Fenn.

'Newcomer?' suggested Corbane, turning to Deagan who was studying the girl as she and her partner moved past them.

Second oldest son of the Planetary Manager, Deagan was the highly trained security manager for all imports, exports and applicants for short or permanent residence.

'I could check again but she doesn't match my recollections of the three female IDs we processed last week.'

'She couldn't be a newcomer,' said Corbane, now flatly contradicting himself, 'How would she know there's only a minimal guard at the Residence tonight? And that she could scale the garden wall 'cause it's no longer powered?'

concoction of Verulean lace she's wearing. And it doesn't compare with our crasher's effort.'

'If she's from Outback, she might not know she's at risk with old Walteron,' said Corbane, a bit anxious. He was a considerate and responsible young man. 'Gavotte's not easy to master. She's obviously danced it before and often. They don't do that sort of thing in the Streets!'

'Dance with her next then, Corbane. You know the Street accents,' said Deagan.

Before his friends could vacillate, he took them both by the elbows and propelled them through the onlookers to the point where the girl and Walteron were likely to finish the gavotte.

'If she's not Street, you take the next dance, Fenn. You range enough in the Outback to identify the twang.'

'Then you'll dance with her and short out her dress,' said Corbane, indignantly pulling his arm from his friend's grasp.

since names were never exchanged at a costumed Touch Down dance), 'is a shy and gentle youth who, like myself, is all admiration for your raiment. My sincerest compliments on your originality.'

'Accepted, good sir,' said the girl with such composure and in such pure Standard accents that Deagan knew she was neither Streetie, newcomer nor Outback Domainer.

'Since he is so shy, may I request that you favour him with the next dance?' Deagan continued, subtly changing his position to form, with his two friends, a circle in front of the girl that excluded Walteron.

'The dance after the one I am claiming by right of first request,' said Cordane, with a smart clap of his boot heels and a mock glare at Deagan and Fenn.

One could just perceive her smile through the coruscating mist of her face veil but her eyes, a clear intelligent green, emphasised by the shifting shades of her attire, gleamed with amusement. A flick of her green gaze told Deagan she was aware of Walteron, fuming at the deft exclusion, and the man's obvious keen intention to extend his acquaintance with her.

'I put in my most humble bid for the third dance, lovely lady,' said Deagan, 'and each third one afterwards.'

'You mean to monopolise my dances?' She looked from one importuning costumed officer to the next, avoiding Walteron's attempts to reclaim her attention.

'Three doesn't constitute a monopoly,' said Fenn who tended to be literal.

'But assuredly offers protection,' added Deagan.

'Mutual protection?' She tilted her head sideways just slightly in Walteron's direction. Her eyes lingered on Deagan's face and he knew she had taken the warning.

'Please say yes,' Corbane urged with just the right note of petition in his voice so that she could be swayed to compliance without appearing to offend the other aspiring partners. She nodded assent to Cordane.

'May I have the dance after his?' Fenn asked eagerly, inspired by Corbane's success, the two oblivious, as Deagan was not, to Walteron's set mouth and angry eyes.

Fortunately the music began at that point and Corbane triumphantly swung the girl onto the floor, to take their positions in one of the faststeps at which Corbane was very adept.

'Didn't think you'd be able to join us tonight, Walteron,' said Deagan politely

One could just perceive her smile through the mist of her face veil.... her eyes, a clear intelligent green, gleamed with amusement.

'She's no Streetie or Walteron would have tried to ooze her off the floor by now,' said Deagan, 'I wonder how she's operating that haze she wears in place of a gown. Fascinating use of refracted light for those random opaques and transparencies.' He jiggled his hand as if the movement would generate the answer. 'Must be a net but how can she get so much power?'

'We're not going to let old Walteron get her, are we? Lovely creature like that,' said Corbane in a tone that made his friends regard him with amusement.

'If Deagan's right and she's in a circuit-protected dress, what could Walteron do?' asked Fenn.

'Short the circuits in a dark corner,' Deagan replied, 'if he can. I'd like a dance with her if only to see how the haze is engineered.'

The other two awarded him dubious, almost outraged glares. Deagan chuckled and gestured towards other parts of the vast room where the majority of eyes did seem to be centred on Walteron and his shimmering partner.

'You've got to admit it's a bloody clever costume. Pure hatred gleams from half the female eyes. Just look at your mother's disapproving glare, Fenn. And you know that your sister, Marla, spent all year dreaming up that rather fetching

'Short her dress? Here in the Residence?' Deagan grinned sardonically and jerked his head towards his father who was laughing affably at some outworld ranking guests. The PM's moods could change to implacable discipline when necessary and all three young men knew it. 'Besides, shorting would burn her between contact points. My interest is purely theoretical. That creation is ingenious.'

'Expensive, too, I'd say,' added Fenn. 'She's like a lovely double-moon mist.'

Corbane blinked in surprise, for the young Domainer was not given to metaphors.

'Under that face veil, she could be ugly as a roake, but right now, what a fillip to a dull dance,' said Deagan. 'Quickly, Corrie. The dance is ending!'

He gave his friend a push forward onto the dance area so that the slick surface almost catapulted Corbane against Walteron.

The old lecher won't relinquish,' said Deagan, irritated as he and Fenn watched the exchange between the two would-be partners. 'Let's reinforce before Corrie muffs it.' Deagan, clutching Fenn unobtrusively at the elbow, strode quickly to the trio. 'Oh, lovely maiden of the double moon mists,' he said, with a click of his heels and a smart salute in keeping with his elegant formal Space uniform, 'my friend here' (and he gestured to Fenn



as he, Fenn and the older man had to leave the dance floor.

'Sorry about that subsidence, Walteron. Trust no one was killed,' added Fenn ingenuously. 'That Aldebaran specialist'll soon sort it out: they've had so much experience in the same sort of thing.'

Walteron's eyes blazed at Deagan and, with a disgusted snort at Fenn, he stalked away to the refreshment rooms.

'What did I say to put him in such a temper?' The young Domainier peered at the departing man in perplexity.

'Don't worry about it.' They both turned to spot Corbane and the girl amid the enthusiastic dancers of the faststep.

She could, Deagan thought, be a trained mimic or actress, contracted in for the Celebrations, but she hadn't faltered in her pure accent of the well-bred and highly educated. She'd been very quick to take advantage of their protection from someone like Walteron who would have been the obvious choice of a Streetie. Of more interest to Deagan were the tiny sparkling green nodes she wore like jewels as ear, finger and toe rings. Two slightly larger ones were attached as pendants on the fine circlet about her neck and on her browband. Earring and brow bands set up the circuit for the face veil, and the gown was generated between the other nodes. The resultant haze of light refraction was more of an engineering feat than a fabric maker's.

When Cordane's dance was ended, Deagan and Fenn quickly joined the pair, edging out two new contenders for her company. They chatted with her on

inconsequential topics until the music of a slow patterned dance started and Fenn now had the privilege of handing the girl into a space of the decorous circle.

'She's got style,' Cordane said enthusiastically as he and Deagan watched again from the sidelines. 'She's not Streetie nor a newcome Outbacker. Say, could she be one of that new lot of technicians landed a few months back?'

'I thought of that possibility, too, but I handle all the identity programming, and I'd swear she couldn't be one of them.'

'Oh!' Corbane sounded deflated. 'Private adventurer here on a visit? Lots of 'em come for Touch Down.'

'If she'd any planetary standing elsewhere, she'd've been on the official list.'

'We don't know that she isn't, do we? I only assumed she was party-crashing because we first saw her near the garden entrance.'

'A good point. I'll check the guard console.'

Deagan's progress around the perimeter was hampered by envious questions, subtle or blatant, about the identity of the lovely girl in gauze.

The nearest console was located in the men's rooms and gave him a list of all official invitations as well as a quick view-through of the costumed figures passing the guard-eye at the main door of the Residence. She had not entered formally.

He got back as the music came to its stately climax, with dancers bowing or curtsying formally to partners.

'During my dance with her,' Deagan told Cordane, 'you and Fenn check the garden. She didn't come in past the guard-eye. But keep your ear on the music. We don't want them in on our time,' he added, flicking his fingers at the other young men poised at the edge of the dance floor to cut in on the mysterious girl.

He had just turned his glance back to the girl when he noticed that, as she rose from her deep curtsy, she glanced at the crystal timepiece above the main entrance to the dancing hall. An odd concern for a girl enjoying enviable popularity.

He tried, during that interval, to turn the conversation to her arrival at Fomalhaut City, or her family, or anything that would give them clues as to her identity, but she deftly avoided answering him by flirting with Cordane and Fenn. As the strains of the next dance emanated from the android musicians, Cordane gave a disgusted laugh.

'You timed that well, Deagan,' he said — for his pavanne had not allowed much contact and Deagan would obviously make the most of this waltz.

Even as Deagan laughed at Cordane's chagrin, his phrase lingered oddly. Deagan had almost made the connection as he offered his arms to the misty maiden. Then, he forgot the half-formed thought as he placed his right hand about her waist, took her left firmly in his and swept her out in perfect rhythm to the lovely ancient melody. She also knew the waltz exceedingly well.

Holding her closely, he could not miss the delicate scent she wore but it wasn't the

sort used by a woman wishing to seduce a susceptible male. Her body, under the silky envelope of the generated haze, was lithe and fit: her hand grip in his firm, so that this was no indolent social lass. Her left hand, traditionally placed on the peak of his shoulder, did not as he had half expected curl provocatively towards his neck.

'It's an interesting game you play, lovely lady! My compliments on your campaign.'

'Campaign, captain?' Her teasing query was half reproach.

'A clever penetration of the sacred precincts of the Residence, and its most prestigious families' gathering.'

'Penetration, sir? But all restrictions are lifted during Touch Down.' Her eyes danced up at him, challengingly. Then slid, fleetingly, once again towards the timepiece as they glided past it.

It was that action which confirmed Deagan's previously half-formed notion. But she was regarding him again and her eyes widened enquiringly so he masked his expression and smiled negligently down at her.

'True enough and a costume as magnificent as yours would be wasted on the Streets. Though that is where the true adventurer would seek excitement.'

'In the Streets?' Haughty amusement rippled in her voice as well as disdain for his suggestion. 'Adventurer could be apt. So is the adjective; for merit accomplished on one's own resources is infinitely more satisfying. Don't you agree?'

He chuckled appreciatively for that clever shaft was aimed at his inherited position in Fomalhaut society although she would not know that his particular job was no sinecure.

'Life can be a true adventure in many ways, my lovely lady, and you've made this night adventurous for me... and my friends,' he added generously. But then he pulled her closer to him and heard her laugh in his ear as her cheek lightly touched his.

'Close tactics will avail you nothing, captain. My costume is foolproof.'

'Mysterious one,' and his tone was indignant, 'I wouldn't breach your security. I enjoy too much the come-and-go of your dazzlement.'

He released his closer hold and swung her in the wide circles of the dance, enjoying himself as he had never expected to do this Touch Down night.

When he courteously surrendered her to Cordane for his next dance, Fenn told him that they had found nothing to show that she had scaled the four meter wall. Deagan told Fenn to watch and did a few

rapid calculations on the men's room console, checked the time and smiled. An hour to go at the most. She'd've surely noticed the position of the side gates. Getting into the Residence was more of a problem than leaving it on Touch Down night. He made his plan.



He could enjoy his other dance with her, enjoy sparring in conversation for she'd a lively wit as well as a keen intelligence. Fenn and Cordane were utterly smitten and were hard to convince that she intended to leave the Ball as unexpectedly as she'd arrived. He finally did convince them that, should she excuse herself from their company on any pretext, they'd never see her again. They were to let her go with good grace and then quickly get into the gardens to prevent her escaping that way.

At that, Deagan nearly missed his chance. But she gave herself away, her eyes betraying a faint apprehension as she glanced with apparent negligence towards the crystal chronometer.

Deagan excused himself, saying that his father had beckoned. He was careful to pause by the PM.

'Not fair of you to pull rank and monopolize that lovely creature, Deagan,' his father said.

'I haven't! Fenn and Cordane dance with her, too.'

The Planetary Manager gave a derisive snort. 'Do we know her?'

'We will!'

'Oh?' and the PM raised his eyebrows in surprise at so emphatic a reply from his generally unimpressible son.

Deagan left the hall as if on an urgent errand. He was: he wanted to programme all gates on inner lock. The action oughtn't to discommode anyone for the short time he'd need. As he slipped out the main door, he caught a glimpse of the

shimmer entering the women's room. He also saw Fenn and Cordane going out the garden doors.

Where he stood by the main gate in the shadows, he could see the slope of the dome and the misty glow of her gown as she eased herself over the sill of the women's room window. Just as he'd guessed. She moved quickly for the side gate in a half crouch, so he gave her full marks for caution. As she pulled vainly at the locked gate, he glanced at his wrist chrono: she'd precious little time to try other side gates: she'd have to chance that the main one remained open.

At one instant she was a swiftly moving mist, the next a slender white-bodied nymph trailing motes of sparking fire that wafted to the garden sand behind her. She stumbled with a cry of pain, then uttered a round space oath just as he emerged from the shadow of the bushes. Courteously keeping his eyes on hers, he flung about her body the cloak he had brought with him. She did not resist as he encircled her with his arms, but he did not want a passive guest.

'My apologies. I computed the possible energy in your jewel generators and... here I am.'

'Fair enough.' Her body did not yield.

'Is it unfair to out-think a true adventurer?'

He had meant to tease her further but something in her proud look made him forbear. Without the veil, her face had character, and the fine features of good blood. Nor had her manner lost innate self-confidence. He liked her even more as her true self than as a mysterious beauty. So he kissed her lips lightly, trying to convey that he respected her. After the briefest hesitation, her lips responded and her body relaxed in his grasp. He did not press his advantage but stepped back.

'Suppose we find another costume for you for the remainder of the evening, if you'll do us the honour, my lady...?'

'Dacia Cormel of Aldebaran Four,' she said, filling his enquiring pause.

'The soil mechanics engineer?' His doubled surprise made her laugh. 'But you weren't due to arrive for another week or more?' Deagan had never thought to check anticipated visitors and couldn't suppress the ruefulness he felt at that failure. But it was no wonder she could create such a costume. 'Fardles, do you realize that it was Walteron who danced with you first?'

'I do now but he'll never connect *that* me with his precious specialist. And I've clothes outside the gate you infamously locked on me.' She bent suddenly, feeling with both hands about the dark garden sands. 'But first, help me find my other slipper.'

Anne McCaffrey

You may have noticed references in **IMAGINE™** magazine to the Postal Games hobby and to *zines*, and wondered what this was all about. This article is offered as a brief explanation of these terms.

An Introduction to the Postal Games Hobby

by Brian Creese

The Postal Games hobby developed from the playing of **Diplomacy** by post. Diplomacy is a commercial boardgame involving seven players poring over a map of Europe and jockeying for control of the continent. The essence of the game is the freedom of negotiation between players and the simultaneous disclosure of the players' actions. The major problems for those who own Diplomacy sets were:

- a) finding 7 players to play it and
- b) finding the 10 hours (or so) needed for a full game. One answer to these problems is to play the game by post.

All you need then is an eighth player, the Gamesmaster (GM) who receives orders from the other seven players, works out what happens on the board and communicates the results to the players. Not surprisingly, a GM can run several games, and the game reports have developed to include a few personal comments by the GM on the game, the players, life, the universe and everything. Such a publication, usually spirit-duplicated in the earliest days, came to be called a zine.

This strange hobby originated in America, but quickly spread to Britain, and by 1969 we had our own zine, **Albion**, produced by one Don Turnbull — the man who runs TSR UK Ltd and publishes **IMAGINE** magazine.

From those early days, the hobby has expanded dramatically, both in the number of zines produced and in the number of games which can be played through them. Virtually every propriety game has been played by post and many have proved highly successful. Indeed, if you are interested in games, you should find that one of today's fifty or so zines will offer you what you want.

Though zines cover the whole spectrum of styles, they can, for convenience, be grouped into different categories. There are those which still follow the original concept with pages of games reports and minimal 'editorial' from the publisher. There are those zines which are centred entirely on Diplomacy, having nothing to do with other games, while others pursue the opposite course; **Hopscotch** is such a zine, which exists solely to pioneer the playing by post of new and different games. There are 'Soccerboss' zines which run games of football management, and FRP zines which concern themselves largely with Fantasy Role-Playing games. Finally, there are those zines which are produced purely as excuses for their editor's literary dabbings, like my own,

NMRI. It is still true, however, that despite the growth in the number of games available for postal play, virtually every zine in the country offers postal Diplomacy within its pages.

One of the most obvious differences between a postal games zine and something like **IMAGINE** magazine is the amateur — well, let's face it, scruffy — look of the former. Whereas this magazine comes to you via a full-colour professional printing process, the average zine is produced on a stencil duplicator in the back bedroom, complete with drawings done with a blunt needle and ink blots! The worst of this kind can be a challenge to read, while those who can afford to use a litho process approach a professional



standard. Then again, whereas **IMAGINE** magazine is written for a large, unknown audience, the hobby zine is written in an (often very!) informal style for readers who are mostly known to the editor. One of the biggest problems facing the newcomer to the hobby comes from deciphering the various nick-names used for people and understanding the generally cliché style.

The most popular games played by post today are Diplomacy, Railway Rivals, 1829, Sopwith, En Garde and Soccerboss. **Railway Rivals** and **1829** are railway-based management games and **Sopwith** is a World War One aircraft game. In **Soccerboss**, as I have already mentioned, the player is the manager of a football club, responsible not only for the perform-

ances of the team, but for the overall profitability of the club. **United** is a similar game using different rules for the actual football; there are other similar games about many different sports. **En Garde** is a form of role-playing game with players taking on the guise of 17th century noblemen, trying to rise up the Social League table. Generally there are few FRP games run, for obvious reasons; when a zine is published only once a month, a campaign tends to move very slowly. Having said that, postal campaigns do exist, but more common are zines concerned with FRP, discussing various approaches to designing and playing FRP campaigns.

Now that you are all fascinated by the prospect of playing games by post, what do you need to know? First, you must decide what sort of game you wish to play, and what kind of zine you want to receive. You should consider the problem of reliability — zines are amateur publications, produced as a hobby, and they are sometimes irregular in appearance and occasionally fold just after you have sent them your money. Again, some zines have short turnaround periods (the time between the editor receiving all the orders for a game and the posting of the finished zine), while others are more 'relaxed'. All these factors must be weighed up before you lurch into the uncertain world of postal gaming.

To find all the information you will need, the first port of call must be **20 Years On**, a quarterly listing of all the zines, with details about them. Having discovered a few which sound interesting you should next write to the Zine Bank, a service which sends you sample zines for £1 and a large sae. And in the end, you should write to the editors concerned, asking to see a sample of their latest issue, again enclosing an sae. You will then be in a position to join the hobby of postal gaming. See you there!

Brian Creese

Several of the zines Brian mentions are reviewed in our regular Fanzine department on page 42 of this magazine, and further details of the Zine Bank can be found in Tavern Talk on page 38. Until September, **20 Years On** can be obtained from Simon Billenness, 20 Winifred Road, Coulsdon, Surrey CR3 3JA; 35p for a single issue or £1 for 3. A regular column about postal gaming will be appearing in **IMAGINE** magazine later in the year.

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**A WHITE
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LUMINATION

NEWS FROM STATESIDE

The latest information to arrive from the USA shows that across the whole range of products TSR Inc. are publishing lots of new material.

The next shipment to arrive will probably contain a STARFRONTIERS™ mini-module **Assault of the Starship Omicron** and referee's screen; TOP SECRET® module TS004 - **Operation: First Pass** and Gary's EX1 module **Dungeonland**.

Beyond, we await GANGBUSTERS® module GB3 - **Death on the Docks**; I5 - **Tomb of Martek**; X4 - **Master of the Desert Nomads** and EX2 - **Land Beyond the Magic Mirror**.

And delving deeper into the future, look out for M2 - **Maze of the Riddling Minotaur**; the revised version of the GAMMA WORLD™ game; the much awaited STARFRONTIERS™/KNIGHTHAWKS™ game; more ENDLESS QUEST™ books; a new computer game; new SPI products and, eventually, T2a **The Temple of Elemental Evil** part I.

Start building that new bookcase...

DAREDEVILS

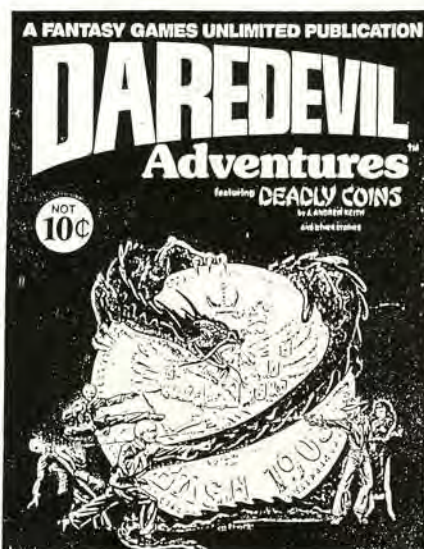
The role-playing game of the 'Two-Fisted Thirties', Daredevils, is now complemented by an adventures book. Aptly (but unimaginatively) called **Daredevils Adventures**, the 24 page volume includes three escapades; The Power of Dr. Remoux, Bring It Back Alive and Deadly Coins. From FGU at £3.50.

WHEN IS A MAP NOT A MAP?

Wizards is the latest board game from Avalon Hill. It is unusual in several respects, not least of which is that the board is a completely blank hex map. Terrain is provided on separate 'tiles' which the players lay out on the board at the beginning of a game, thus creating a different world each time they play. Participants have detailed characters, reminiscent of RPGs, and the object is to become the first character to bring the six Sacred Gems of Ruktal to the Centre of the Sacred Circle. It looks like a good one from Baltimore, and we hope to have a fuller review of the game in # 5.

Alas, the Designer's Notes must stand a good chance of getting a prize for pretentious gibberish. Here's a sample: 'The Wizards and Elfords have compelled us (*the designers*) to set their realm free to become real for us, that their truths might plant their seeds in us. Thus by their yearning to be, they have called themselves into existence.' So one would have thought. How about: 'Thus when Wizards is played and these truths are acted out, their reality is established both in the Wizards' world and in our world and the game has Power to affect the course of events.' Er... quite!

IMAGINE™ magazine would like to thank
Doug Cowie for his assistance
with these items



DUNGEON FLAWS

Dungeon Floor Plans III is the latest Games Workshop accessories release. The title is something of a misnomer, as the set will consist of roof-tops, balconies, boats and 'other water features.' Also from GW, there is a new Runequest solo adventure to look out for. This one is **Soloquest III: The Sun King's Bride**.

VICTORY FOR 007

Although they are mainly producers of historical simulations, Victory Games of New York are planning to bring out a role-playing game. Not just any RPG either. This will be the official **JAMES BOND 007** game. Victory must hope that some of Bond's multi-billion dollar appeal rubs off onto their product. Should be interesting to see what character attributes players roll for.

LOOSE CHITS

On the games review pages of this issue you will find a review of **Starstone**, a product from a new British company, Northern Sages. Starstone is a package designed to be usable with any FRP system, with a strong medieval flavour. The author, Paul Vernon, has been selling the scenario to games shops almost one by one, and hopes to follow up his success with two or three similar modules a year.

Following on from their success with **Warlock of Firetop Mountain**, Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson have now brought out a book each in the same series. **Citadel of Chaos** is Steve's gem, whilst Ian gives us **Forest of Doom**. Once again readers are invited to partake in an adventure using a technique familiar to role-playing gamers but apparently of great novelty value to a wider audience. From Puffin Books at £1.25 each.

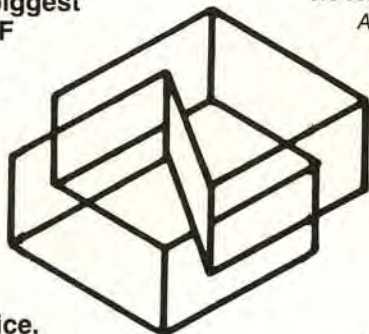
From Chaosium comes the **Runequest Companion** (£6.95). This digest, about the same size as a Soloquest, contains items previously published in Wyrms' Footnotes and new material relating to the official Glorantha Runequest campaign. The current issue has articles on Trolls, the Black Horse Troop and Cult Compatibility tables. Later issues will appear when Chaosium feel like doing them (they do say it's irregular!).

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by Anne Hamill

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The Philosopher's Stone. Restless, changeable, it was sought by those who wished to step sideways out of time to where the Stone splayed out events of other times, other worlds. Like all oracles, the meaning of the events displayed was often obscure. But an adept, reading the story, looking deep into the picture overleaf might see more than mere scattered images in the facets of the Stone....

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The picture of the Stone overleaf is the first in a series of four pictures which will show events in the careers of a fighter, magic-user, cleric and thief. At the foot of this page you will find the story of how the first of the four, the fighter, found his sword, and the picture illustrates this.

The Fighter

Looking at the familiar sight, it seemed amazing that he hadn't been here before. Weird light licked the sword on the altar, fell dancing onto the looped stone coils. Uneasily, he loosed his own sword, and lifted his shield a fraction. He moved nearer. Gold coin lay mingled with bones everywhere around him; jewels shattered under his boot as he trod slowly forward. The sword flamed steadily. He felt it reaching for him, pulling him closer, as though there was a vacuum there, a lack which only he could satisfy. He felt the shivering start, the tremors that, fed by pain, would catapult him from the dream screaming, to resume his quest. But he did not wake, because he was not asleep; and this was no longer a dream.

Stifling pillared darkness, the careless treasure; it was the place he'd dreamed of, all right. Oh yes, and the bodies. He lifted a skeletal wrist. Burned. The right hand charred to the elbow. It fell to powder at his touch. His mouth lifted in a grin, of appreciation only. The sword had done this to them, in the way of the dream; and it was waiting to do the same to him.

However, not all is clearly stated. In order to enter this month's prize competition you must list the answers to as many of the following riddles as you are able to decipher:

1. The name of the sword, and how the fighter worked it out.
2. The inscription on the sword.
3. The name of the fighter.
4. The alignment of the fighter.
5. Any other messages you found.
6. Your own explanation of the significance of the woman appearing in the dream (up to 100 words).

The winner will be the person who has solved the greatest number of the riddles. In the event of a tie, the contestant who offers the most convincing explanation of the role of the woman will be awarded the prize. The decision of the publisher will be final.

He looked about for the woman, but she did not appear. So that was to be different, then. Always in the dream it had been she who had offered him the sword, and in some strange way, she against whom he needed to use it. As in the dream, he would need the sword to escape this place. Only entrance was uncontested. But in the dream he had been forced to take the sword; here at least he had time. Time to study it, to work out what he must do to avoid living out the death he had dreamed so often, the sword flaming and blooming with his pain, while his hand blistered and melted until the agony made an end of him. As it had made an end, apparently, of those whose bones he walked on.

At first he hadn't known what the dream meant. Only when his hands began to shake and his eyes dulled through sleeplessness did he seek advice.

'I've heard of that sword, hero,' his teacher said. 'It's said to be a powerful one, forged before the libraries were burned and the old knowledge lost.

There's always one driven to find it, but I never heard that any of them came back. Maybe you'll be luckier in taming it than they were. But I've heard that the man who'd wield that sword must not flinch from hardship; there's a long journey ahead of you, hero, and a tough one.'

A long and unrelenting journey it had turned out to be. He had ridden the soil of twenty countries, and crossed tracts so barren none had survived to give them names. He had gone short of food and warmth and water; and always, of sleep. At last, leaving even his horse behind he had crossed the slick black path into this fortress of ice, and he had ended here. A bare step away, the sword. A bare step away, death.

He drew breath. He had seen all he needed to see. It only remained to find out if he was right, or, like all the others, wrong.

He laid his hand on the sword. As it began to flame, softly, caressingly, he spoke its name....





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ARAMAX ONE

by John Tantoblin

This is a STARFRONTIERTM adventure module, and you must have a copy of the STARFRONTIERS expanded game rules to play it.

If you are going to be a player stop reading here. The rest of the information in this module is for the referee alone.



This module has been designed for a group of three to five characters. Ideally, these characters should not be newly generated, but should have already earned (and spent) experience points improving their skill levels. Pre-experienced characters are provided in this module, and the referee should compare these with any characters that the players may wish to use.

Preface

ARAMAX ONE is set on Triad in the Cassidine star system. Triad in Cassidine is one of the trade and industrial centres of the Frontier, generally referred to as

one of the Hub Worlds. Nearly all the large corporations have offices and production facilities on planet or in close orbit.

There are several smaller corporations with facilities on Triad and in orbit. All of these companies are limited to the Cassidine system at present, but are attempting to expand their activities outsystem.

Aramax Power Factors (APF) is one of these smaller corporations, with interest in a number of fields including mining, shipping and, of course, power generation and distribution. At present the company supply over half of Triad's power require-

ment, but its main competitor, Sunpower Inc, is attempting to expand its market share.

APF Ground Site One (ARAMAX ONE) is the collection array for a system of solar power satellites which supply the industrial belt round Triad Low Starport.

Aramax One is also the site of APF's central computer. It organises the power distribution network, the maintenance of the collection arrays and satellites, and handles the company record keeping. Although the company has other computers at its other offices and facilities, the Aramax One machine is vital to the running of the company.

I. Background

Before beginning play the referee should read this module to become familiar with the outline of the adventure, and the details presented in its various sub-sections. All the information relating to a specific topic (eg the Computer) is presented in a single boxed section. This information is for the referee only. General information, such as room contents, is given in the main body of the module. Some of the information is indented and printed in a different face and this may be read to the players at the relevant times.

Apart from combat skills, the characters will also require a good range of other skills, mostly of the 1st and 2nd level. Computer, Robotics, Technician and Medical skills should be available to have a reasonable chance of success. One of the characters must have at least 1st level Demolitions skill.

Player's Background

The referee should read the following to the players at the start of the adventure:

Early one evening, while you are sitting in a bar near Triad Low Starport drinking your last few credits away, you are approached by a new, obviously expensive, cybot. The machine quietly asks

you to accompany it to see its master, who has a job you may be interested in.

It leads you into a dimly lit room behind the bar. Partly hidden in the shadows is a middle-aged vrusk. As you sit down the vrusk switches on a small device. The cybot gives each of you an envelope, and the vrusk begins to speak in a heavily distorted voice:

'Good evening, gentlebeings. In each of the envelopes you will find Cr.100. This is a consultancy fee. As such it also buys your silence about this conversation.

'I have a small task for you. It involves some personal risk, but you will be adequately compensated.

'About five kilometres south of here is the local collection array for the solar power satellite system. It is owned by Aramax Power Factors — APF to their friends and enemies. APF also use the site to house their central computer; it holds all their records, and virtually runs the company from day-to-day. I, for reasons of my own, want the computer destroyed.

'If you are willing to break into the site and do this, you will have more than my gratitude. Your total fee will be Cr.5,000, half now and half on completion. This is enough to buy you all tickets on the next starship to leave Triad, no matter where it is going. I can also offer some material

aid to you — transport, weaponry, tools and explosives. All you have to supply are the skills to do the job.

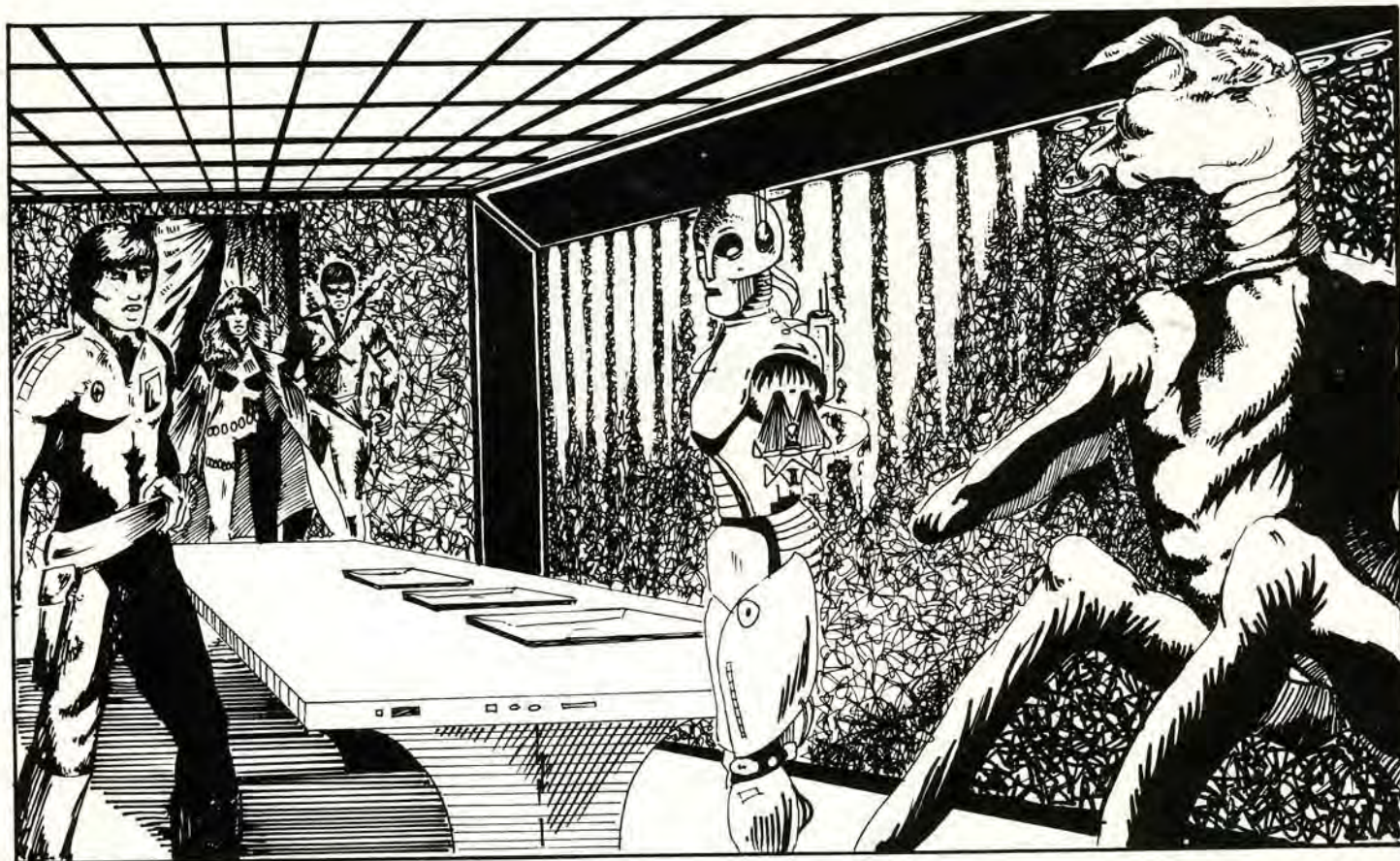
'There is one proviso. You must do the job tonight. It has been arranged that only five or six guards, instead of the normal squad of twelve, will be on duty, and none will be heavily armed. All the night staff will have been sent home.'

The cybot gives you an envelope. Inside are five bundles of banknotes, all used, amounting to Cr.2,500. It also gives you a groundcar key, and a security pass bearing the legend *APF Security Central*. The vrusk then continues:

'Your money. The car outside contains all your equipment and a roadmap showing your target. The pass card should get you past the outer gates and into the building. After that you are on your own.

'And finally, don't try to take the money and run. The rest of your pay will be waiting with my cybot at the starport. There is a shuttle at 0800 tomorrow, and a starship to Prenglar is waiting. I am rich and well connected, if you do try to cross me — vengeance is easy for someone in my position.'

The vrusk gets up, and with a curt gesture to his cybot, he and it leave the room and disappear through the back door.



Referee's Background

The story told to the party by the vrusk is true, but incomplete.

The vrusk failed to identify himself. He is Aramax Kejganokh no Kami — like many vrusk he normally gives his company name first. Kejganokh is the sole owner of Aramax Power Factors, and is therefore a success in vrusk society. His reasons for wanting his own property destroyed stem directly from his esteemed position.

Two days ago, while running a financial analysis program on the Aramax One computer, Kejganokh discovered that payments totalling Cr.601,000 had been made to a number of non-existent sub-contractors. Further investigations revealed that the payments had been made on the authority of APF's Operations Manager, a human called Fiona Talenc.

Kejganokh could not report the theft. As a vrusk, a member of a race which prides itself on its business expertise, to be the victim of blatant commercial theft was bad enough, to admit to being such a victim was unthinkable. If knowledge of this crime became public Kejganokh would lose face in the eyes of his fellow vrusk, and his company would lose status. Cursing himself for hiring a human in the first place, he resolved to deal with the matter as secretly as possible. Thus, after gathering what equipment he could from company stores, altering the guard rosters and raiding the petty cash, he approached the party. He carefully disguised his voice and remained in the shadows to prevent recognition by his new hirelings.

However, Kejganokh's behaviour has not gone unnoticed. Fiona Talenc spotted his increased use of computer time, and rapidly realised that her fraud had been uncovered. Surprised by the non-arrival of the police with a warrant for her arrest, she decided to take matters into her own hands. Converting her ill-gotten gains from credit accounts to cash and easily transportable valuables she prepared to flee on the next available starship, but before leaving Fiona decided to destroy the evidence at Aramax One.

Fiona has hired a group of mercenaries to attack the Aramax One site, posing as terrorists. She hopes that this will allow her to escape off-planet during the resulting misdirected investigation. This was to have taken place yesterday, but she discovered that the guard rosters had been changed and rescheduled the attack for tonight. She and her henchmen have attacked Aramax One while Kejganokh was talking to the party.

The adventure begins after the party have taken the waiting groundcar and driven to Aramax One. As they arrive at the Main Gate the site is quiet, although some lights are on in the main building.

The Ground Car & Other Equipment

The ground car that Kejganokh has supplied to the party has been taken from APF's motor pool, and the theft hidden by manipulating the computer records. It is a standard model (see Expanded rules p.29), and still has power for 400km at cruise speed.

In the boot is the equipment that Kejganokh was able to remove from various APF stocks:

Three Automatic Pistols, with two ammunition clips (40 rounds) each. One Laser Pistol, with a depleted power clip (15 SEU remaining). One Electroshunner, without a power clip. One Grenade Rifle, with one Doze grenade and two Tangler Grenades. One Machine Gun and Tripod, with two ammunition belts (400 rounds).

One Medkit, as defined on p.45 of the Expanded rules. One partial Techkit, which does *not* contain the following: jack, nuts, bolts, screws, and spray waterproofing.

Two kilograms of Tornadium D-19, with a variable timer/detonator.

Three fully charged 20 SEU power clips.

The Referee should note that Triad's gravity is higher than standard 1.1g — and that any character who chooses to take the machine gun will be encumbered in the confined space inside the building, regardless of that character's strength.

Furthermore, the machine gun must be properly mounted on the tripod to fire without penalty. This takes two turns. Firing the machine gun 'from the hip' is possible, but in this adventure a penalty of -60% is accrued.

The security pass card that the party have been given is better than they have been told. Due to an error in Kejganokh's programming the card will open any door in the APF facility, rather than just the main gate.



II. The Building

The only building on the Aramax One site is detailed below.

Unless noted otherwise all doors in the building are controlled by card activated locks located next to them. Certain cards are not valid for some of the doors in the facility (eg Security cards will not open the archives).

The construction standards of the building vary slightly. As far as structural damage points are concerned the walls and doors are constructed to the standards given on p.25 of the Expanded rule book. The archives (room 13) are constructed to vault standards.

1. The Perimeter Fence, Main Gate and Car Park.

The whole of the Aramax One site is surrounded by a monitored, chainlink fence, some 3m high. There is only one access point, on the north side, where the road is blocked by a powered sliding gate.

The Referee should read the following to the party when they arrive at the gate:

At this point the perimeter fence is broken by an access road through a large gate. The gate is wide enough to take a hover truck with ease. It is closed.

On the right hand side of the gate, at a height of 1m, is a cardlock.

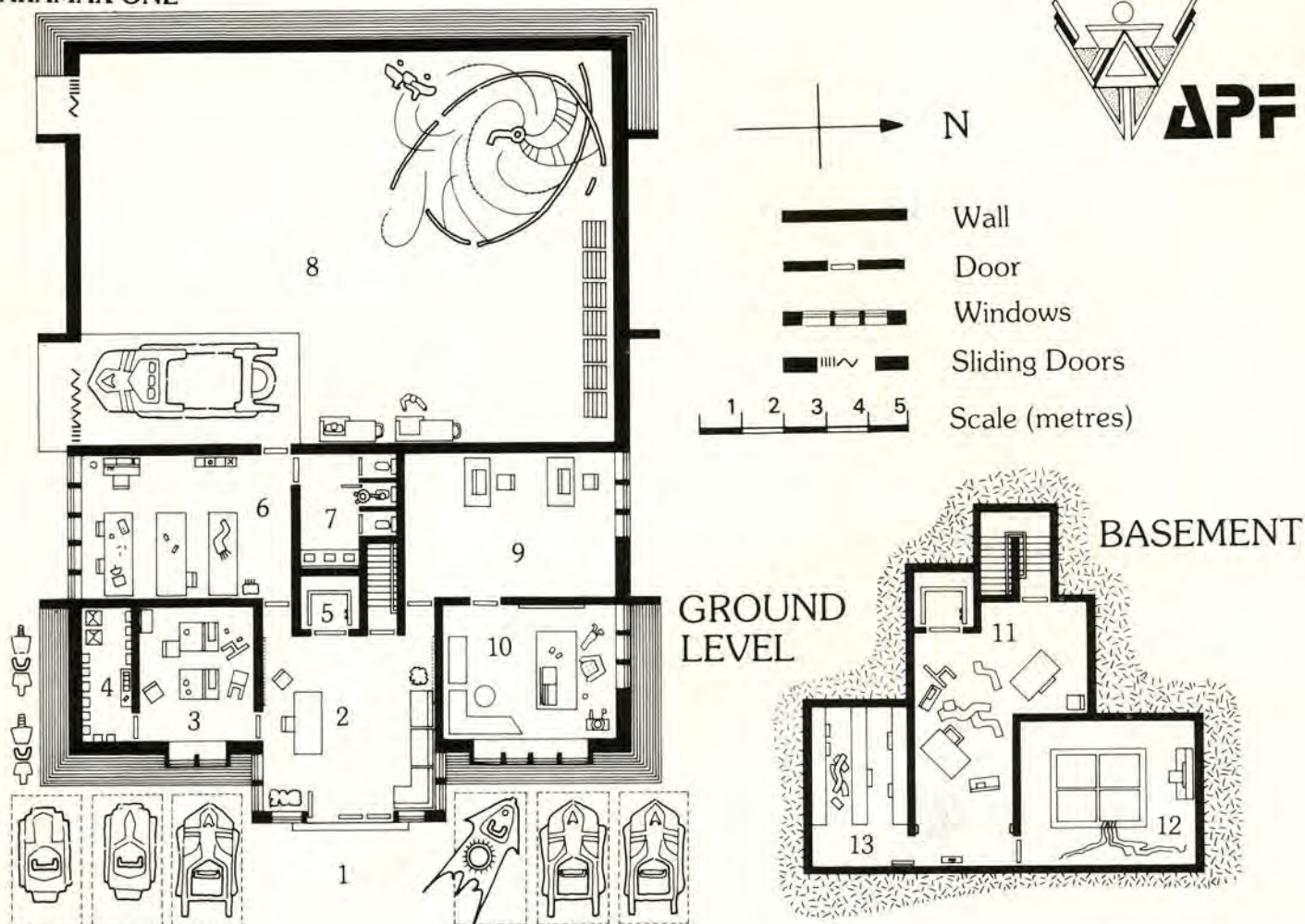
Beyond the gate is the building, with a carpark in front of it. Several vehicles and two ground cycles are parked there.

The cardlock controls the gate. The security card Kejganokh gave the party will open the gate without any problems, but the fact will register on the computer terminal in the security office (room 3).

If the party decide to break through the perimeter fence, and fail to deactivate the monitoring system, the main computer will despatch a security robot (see the relevant boxed section) to investigate.

Once inside the compound the party is in the spacious car park. Six vehicles are parked here; three ground cars in APF livery, two private ground cars and a sports-type hover car. The ground cycles are in APF livery and bear Security flashes.

Only the hover car is unlocked. This is Fiona Talenc's personal vehicle, and it has been booby-trapped by Kejganokh. Under the front seat is a 200g explosive charge, linked via a timing device to the ignition system. The bomb is set to explode after another 3 minutes of driving time, causing 5d10 + 75 points of damage to all those within the car.



Security



All the doors on the site are controlled by card activated locks (security device level 1), which the security program monitors. If any door is opened without the correct card (by the failure of a character Deactivating Alarms/Defences) the computer displays the fact on the security office terminal(s), and notes the time. Theoretically the security personnel then carry out a manual investigation.

All the security guards normally carry security cards which will open any door except those to the site manager's office and the computer archives.

The outer fence is also subject to monitoring by a simple electrical circuit (security device level 1). Should the fence be broken, the computer will despatch a security robot to investigate the breach and inform the security office. Inside the site there is a network of pressure sensors (security device level 2), but these have never been used and are now unserviceable. However, the players should not be told this if they discover the network and attempt to deactivate it.

The left hand front door of the building is standing open.

2. The Reception Area

This is the entrance hallway. The furniture, three couches, a desk and a pair of chairs, is of an opulent standard. The walls are hung with a number of holograms showing images of satellites, deep space mining equipment, and one shows a distinguished business vrusk.

Opposite the main entrance are a set of lift doors. There is only one button, with a downward arrow on it.

If any character carefully examines the picture of the vrusk, and makes an Intuition check, he or she should realise (ie the player should be told by the Referee) that this vrusk has been seen before. The hologram is a portrait of Kejganokh no Kami, and is labelled as such. The label also gives Kejganokh's position as owner of APF.

The Referee should feel free to invent other items of interest, such as magazines, for the room.

3. The Security Office

The only lighting in here comes from two small desktop lamps. However, you can see that a struggle of some kind has

occurred in here. Two of the chairs have been overturned and a set of playing cards is scattered across the floor.

Only one of the two computer terminals is working. The broken one has had a cup of coffee poured into it. The working one has some kind of time sheet display on its screen.

A few half drunk cups of coffee stand around on the desks and floor.

This is the security office. The normal occupants are now locked in the toilets (room 7).

Any member of the party who makes an Intuition check should be told that there is a small blood stain, from the wounded guard, next to the broken terminal. The coffee in the unspilt cups is only tepid.

The working computer terminal is linked to the Installation Security program. The display shows a list of recent incidents at Aramax One as the security program interprets them. Included on this are the recent arrival of Fiona Talenc, APF's Operations Manager, the arrival of an unscheduled hover truck, and an unauthorised entry into the computer archives (room 13). Depending on the party's earlier actions the display will also show the entry of a security detachment through the main gate, or the despatch of a security robot to investigate a breach in the outer fence.

Fiona Talenc & The Mercenaries

Name	STR/STA	DEX/RS	INT/LOG	PER/LDR	IM	RW	M
Fiona	40/60	70/50	75/55	70/50	5	45	35
Civilian Skeinsuit (50 points), Laser Derringer*. Skills: Beam Weapons 1, Computer 3.							
Mercenary 1	25/50	55/35	55/55	45/45	4	38	38
Mercenary 2	35/60	40/20	50/50	40/40	2	30	30
Mercenary 3	55/75	65/45	45/55	35/35	5	43	43
Mercenary 4	30/55	65/45	40/40	60/60	5	43	43
Military Skeinsuit (50 points), Laser Pistol, Vibroknife, three 20 SEU powerclips. Skills: Beam Weapons 1, Melee Weapons 1.							
Mercenary 5	25/50	65/45	30/30	55/55	5	43	33
Mercenary 6	60/85	40/20	35/35	50/50	2	30	20
Military Skeinsuit (50 points), Auto Pistol, one spare ammunition clip. Skills: Projectile Weapons 1, Demolitions 1 (Mercenary 6 only).							

Fiona and her troops arrived at Aramax One while Kejganokh was interviewing the party. Their transportation, a hover truck, is now parked in the loading bay section of the warehouse. Fiona Talenc used her own skimmer (now parked in front of the main entrance). Fiona has had to take part to get the mercenaries into the site, using her security pass card.

As a group they have the following equipment: six security pass cards (taken from the guards), 2.5kg of Tornadium D-19, three variable timer/detonators.

The mercenaries will fight bravely and efficiently within reason. If they are likely

to be killed they will surrender, and, being honourable men, will not violate any terms of their surrender.

The Laser Derringer that Fiona Talenc carries is a non-standard item. Designed as a small 'last resort' weapon, it is made to be used and thrown away. It does not have a replaceable powerclip; this is built into the weapon. As a result the derringer can only fire at two settings: two 4d10 shots or one 10d10 shot. If the lower setting is chosen the second shot will be the same. It cannot be recharged; the laser crystal burns out when used. Several corporations build models, but the BYK Disposable Laser is most popular.

Weapon:	Damage:	Rate:	Defence:	PB:	Short:	Medium:	Mass:	Cost:
Laser Derringer	4d10/10d10	2/1	Albedo	0-2	3-8	9-15	.25	750



The referee should feel free to invent other, worthless items for this room.

4. The Security Store

This is the equipment locker for the duty guard detachment. A dozen sets of weaponry/equipment hang from the walls, and a stack of powerclips and a recharger are on a shelf next to the door.

In the far corner of the room are two unopened boxes.

Each set of weaponry/equipment is identical and consists of the following:

- One Electrostunner (without powerclip) and holster
- One Stunstick (without powerclip) and holster
- Two Tangler grenades
- One Flashlight
- One modified Chronocom (this model only has a range of 1km)

The unopened boxes contain two brand new Sonic Stunners, still in their original wrappings and, of course, without powerclips.

There are 29 powerclips in total. The recharger is a unit capable of repowering five 20 SEU clips at one time, taking 30 minutes to do so.

5. The Lift and Stairs

The lift is the normal means of descending to the computer in the basement, though the stairs are provided for use in an emergency. The lift is capable of carrying eight humans or the equivalent (up to four vrusk), and has only two floor selection buttons.

The mercenaries have neither booby-trapped nor planted monitors on them. They are of the mistaken belief that they will hear anyone using either method to enter the basement.

6. The Technical Workshop/Office

The lights are on in this room, illuminating what is obviously a combination of light repair shop and office space. Various tools, and robotic/computer components, are scattered across most of the available table space in the room — as well as a good part of the floor.

Sitting at the only computer terminal desk is a man in para-military uniform.

This is the repair facility at the site for minor electronic repairs to the robot controls of the power array elements. Major repairs have to be carried out in the field.

The man sitting at the computer terminal is mercenary 1. He has been assigned to guard the prisoners in the toilets (room 7), but has started playing a computer game instead (using the Communications programme on the main computer). He is so engrossed that the party will automatically surprise him. If a fight breaks out the remainder of the mercenaries (in rooms 12 and 13) downstairs will not know of it. The guards held prisoner in the toilets will hear the fight, but will be unable to do anything about it.

Once the mercenary has been subdued or captured the party may search the room. The tools in the room amount to two complete techkits and a robcomkit. Various broken robot components are also scattered about. The game that the mercenary was playing was an adventure-style one: B 4073 'The Secret Temple under the Lost Caverns beyond the Forgotten City of the Forbidden Mountains of the Remembered Horrific Lair of the Ancient Ones (part 2)'.

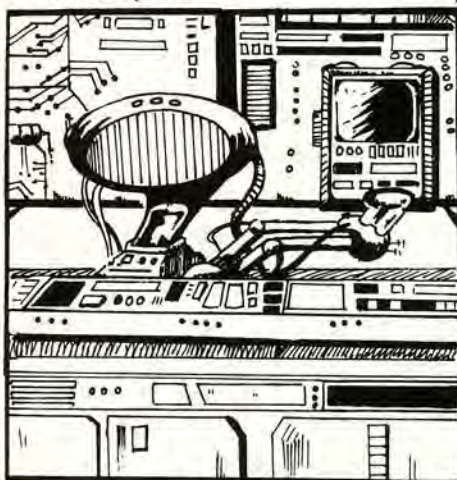
There is nothing else of interest in the room.

7. The Toilets

These are obviously the toilets. Sprawled on the tiled floor, gagged and bound, are two vrusk and four humans. All wear

ARAMAX ONE

The Computer



The computer at Aramax One controls the entire power collection array at the site and supervises the distribution of the energy. The computer also carries out a number of standard accounting functions, and it is these that Fiona Talenc has manipulated to her benefit.

The computer runs the following programs: Analysis 5, Bureaucracy 4, Commerce 4, Communication 1, Industry 4, Information Storage 5, Installation Security 2, Maintenance 4, Robot Management 6. As a result the computer is a level 5 machine, massing 300kg, requiring 300 or more points of damage to destroy it.

The computer runs the power collection array through the Industry and Robot Management programs. Each element of the collection array is a self-contained dedicated robot system, which takes its overall orders from the Industry program via the Robot Management program. If the computer should fail the individual robots can keep the power arrays aimed at the solar power satellites for a short time, until central control can be re-established. The various programs of the computer system can be accessed from any terminal in the building. The only program which cannot be accessed from any terminal is the Installation Security program. That program can only be accessed from the terminals in the security office, and from the terminals in the computer room.

All communications, including the internal and external telephone lines, are handled by the Communications program. It is possible to manipulate this program and jam all communications with the outside world from any terminal in the building.

Computer skill may be used with the standard chance of success to manipulate the Information Storage, Analysis or Commerce programs. Success indicates that Fiona Talenc's previous theft/manipulation has been discovered (ie that Cr.601,000 are missing), but not who is responsible.

Personnel

Name	STR/STA	DEX/RS	INT/LOG	PER/LDR	IM	RW	M
Sgt. Gomer V	50/45	45/30	50/50	45/45	3	43	33
Military Skeinsuit (50 points). Skills: Beam Weapons 2, Melee Weapons 1, Medical 1.							
Guard 1	60/10	45/50	40/50	55/50	5	33	33
Guard 2	50/40	60/60	45/35	30/30	6	40	40
Guard 3	50/50	50/50	70/70	45/45	5	35	35
Guard 4V	40/50	50/50	45/45	45/45	5	35	35
Guard 5	65/65	50/50	25/35	60/50	5	35	35

Military Skeinsuits (50 points, Guard 1 15 points remaining). Guard 3 has a vibroknife (with a fully charged 20 SEU power clip) hidden in his left boot. Skills: Beam Weapons 1, Melee Weapons 1.

V = Vrusk, all other guards are human.

Normally there are twelve guards at the Aramax One site. However, Kejganokh has manipulated the computer assignments so only six guards are present.

Fiona Talenc and her mercenaries have captured the guards, tied them up, and locked them in the toilets (room 7), though not without seriously hurting the first guard. She has been ministered to by Sgt Gomer and locked up with the others.

If the guards are released by the party they will appear suitably grateful, but will,

at the earliest opportunity, arm themselves with laser pistols from the security store (room 4) and attack. Fiona Talenc and her mercenaries will be treated as preferred targets. If communications with the outside world are still possible, Sgt Gomer will contact the police and ask for assistance.

If the police *are* called, the course of events is entirely up to the Referee. If the police arrive while the party is still at the Aramax One site, the adventure is effectively ended.

APF company uniforms with Security brassards. One of them, a woman, has been wounded.

In the centre cubicle a maintenance robot is busily polishing the plumbing.

The six people who have been tied up are the APF security personnel (see the relevant section). It is guard 1 who has been wounded in the skirmish when Fiona and the mercenaries arrived. The Referee should note that this guard will suffer the 'Attacker Wounded' penalty in any combat situation.

The robot is a simple-minded maintenance machine (see the relevant boxed section), incapable of following any but the simplest verbal instructions. It is not capable of following even these if they conflict with its pre-programmed function as ordered by the Robot Management program of the main computer. It is thus ignoring the guards, because — logically — they do not exist. It is also incapable of carrying out any aggressive actions or defending itself.

8. The Warehouse

This warehouse space is largely empty. In one corner stands an incomplete power array element. Next to that is a ground cycle without any wheels. A stack of crates stand against one wall. By the smaller door is a pair of robot recharging stations.

In the warehouse loading bay a large, commercial hover truck with an APF logo on the side has been parked and left unlocked.

The warehouse space is used entirely for temporary storage of power units before and after installation on the grid. The power array element which is in here at the moment is awaiting removal to the scrapyard.

The ground cycle parabattery is completely discharged.

The eight crates hold general electronic and small technical spares for the power array. The hover truck has been stolen from another APF facility and used as transport by the mercenaries. They intend to use this vehicle for their getaway. It still has power for 900km.

The robot recharging stations will be occupied by either one or two security robots, — the exact number depending on whether or not the party has encountered a robot (eg if the party entered the Aramax One site by breaching the outer fence). See the relevant section for details of the robots.

9. The General Office

This darkened office space contains little of interest apart from two desks, both with computer terminals standing on them. These terminals are switched off.

Robots

Robot	MV	IM/RS	STA	ATT	DM	SA	SD
Security 1	90	5/50	100	50	-	2 Tangler Grenades	Inertia Screen
Security 2	90	5/50	100	50	-	2 Doze Grenades	Albedo Screen
Programs: Restrain							
Maintenance	60	4/40	100	-	-	-	-
Service	30	7/70	100	-	-	-	-

There are normally four robots at the Aramax One site which are not in control of a section of the power array. All the robots are under the control of the Robot Management program on the computer. The robots listed above are the mobile ones used for various purposes around the facility. No statistics are given for the power array robots, as these are dedicated

machines which are not capable of taking any independent action.

Only the security robots are capable of taking any aggressive action. The computer will despatch one of them to investigate any breach in the outer fence and restrain those responsible. If one robot fails the other is sent.

This office is rarely used in the normal course of business at Aramax One, because most administrative functions for the facility are carried out by the main computer. As a result this room is rather spartan.

The Referee should feel free to invent any worthless items of interest for this room.

10. The Site Manager's Office

This is a luxuriously appointed office space. On a large desk sits an executive computer terminal. Behind the desk is a leather chair designed for a human, with a set of golf clubs resting against it. The other furniture in the room — a pair of low couches and a low table — are of similar high quality.

In one corner stands a service robot.

There is little of relevance to the adventure in here. By the computer terminal are stacked a number of computer games modules. There is no documentation of any kind, all hardcopy being produced in the computer room.

The service robot (see the boxed section for details) has been deactivated. If reactivated it is incapable of carrying out any aggressive or defensive actions at all.

11. The Computer Office

Regardless of whether the party uses the lift or the stairs to descend to the basement the view that they have of the scene is as follows:

Although the lights in this office are on, the room has a bluish tinge, due to the pall of smoke and fumes which hang in the air. In the far right hand corner of the office small flames, and the occasional spark, are guttering from the remains of a cardlock. The door next to it is open.

In the corner by the stairs lies the body of a vrusk in APF company work uniform. He has been shot several times by laser and automatic weaponry.

The rest of the office is a shambles. The two desks in the room have been emptied and their contents — mostly computer printouts and other documents — scattered about the floor.

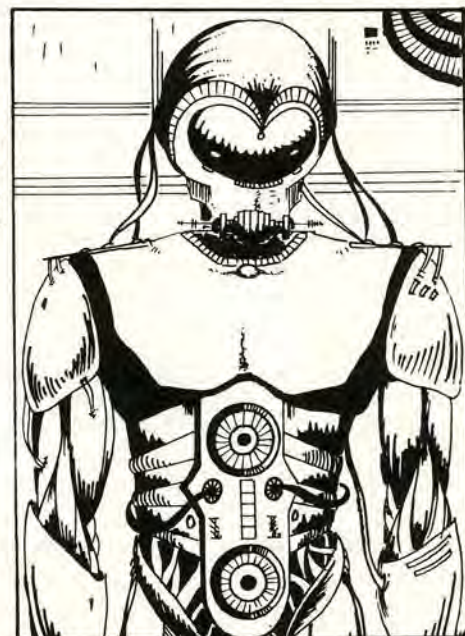
Two computer terminals have been thrown to the floor. One still shows some coherent display on its screen, and appears relatively intact. The other barely flickers and its keyboard has been torn away and smashed.

On the floor by the open door stands a small briefcase, and scattered about are several weapon powerclips.

The smoke and fumes are the results of Fiona's mercenaries shooting apart the cardlock on the door to the computer archives (room 13). Once the party gets closer to the door they will see that part of it has also been shot away by laser fire. As a result all the powerclips on the floor are completely discharged (there are six). The briefcase contains 500g of Tornadium D-19 and a variable timer/detonator set to 15 minutes delay, although it is not yet activated. The mercenaries intend using this to destroy the computer archives.

The vrusk was a computer technician, working on unofficial overtime. The mercenaries shot him in an automatic reaction to meeting someone unexpected. If anyone searches his body they will find a security pass card which will open any door except those to the security office (room 3) and the site manager's office (room 10).

The broken computer terminal is useless. The other terminal is faulty because of the mistreatment it has suffered, resulting in a 10% penalty to the chances of anyone using Computer skill on it.



If the party makes an excessive amount of noise in this room, the two mercenaries in the computer archives will hear and come to investigate. A firefight will then ensue, and Fiona and the remaining mercenaries in the computer room will hear and investigate. The Referee may care to remember that there are 500g of high explosives in the firing zone, and any badly missed shots may hit, and set off, said explosives.

If the party is quiet it will hear sounds of small scale destruction coming from the open doorway. The mercenaries in the computer archives are engaged in destroying the room's contents.

12. The Computer Room

Once the door is open the party will be able to see into the room. If they have already fought Fiona and the mercenaries in the computer office (room 11) the door will be left open. If the party does not use a security card to open the door, and forces it open in some other manner, Fiona and her men will be alerted and ready for trouble. Otherwise:

This is obviously the main computer. Four large brown, orange and cream cabinets stand in the centre of the room on a low plinth, and a hardcopy printer stands against the far wall.

Cables are strewn across the floor, and four people are working on these.

As the door slides fully open, one of the people — a young man — turns around and asks 'Have you finished yet?'. His eyes widen and his hand drops towards his gun....

The man who has spotted the party is mercenary No.4 (see the relevant boxed section for details). The Referee should have this NPC make an Intuition check as defined in the Surprise section on p21 of

ARAMAX ONE

the Expanded rules. If he is not surprised he will shout a warning to his colleagues — Fiona Talenc and mercenaries 5 and 6 — and then attack.

Once combat starts the mercenaries will fight to the best of their abilities. The Referee should decide what laser setting mercenary 4 will use, but the other two, armed with automatic pistols, will fire bursts. Fiona Talenc will seek cover behind the computer.

If the fight goes against the mercenaries (eg two or more are badly wounded) they will offer to surrender. Fiona will also offer to surrender, but will use her laser derringer at the first opportunity and attempt to escape.

If the mercenaries (2 and 3) in the computer archives (room 13) have not been dealt with in some way they will hear the firing and come to the aid of their employer. The Referee should decide whether they are capable of surprising the party.

The wiring that the mercenaries were installing was a set of explosive charges massing 2kg. The charges have not yet been fully wired up, but if one of the party (with Demolitions skill) attempts to complete the installation he or she will receive a bonus of +15% to the chance of success. The two variable timer/detonators which are wired up are set to 15 minutes and 30 minutes, but not yet activated. Although the computer will only take 300 points of damage before destruction, the explosives in place will cause 5d10 +975 points of damage.

If the full charge is used most of the building will be destroyed. If the security guards are still locked in the toilets (room 7) they will be killed in the explosion. The blast radius will be 20 metres, and the referee should decide on the size of the fallout zone for debris.

Once the charges are successfully set in here, and assuming that the full amounts of D-19 are used the mission has been successfully completed. The computer archives (room 13) will be destroyed because they are within the blast radius. If the party have already fought the mercenaries in the computer office there will be no more in here. The demolition wiring will be intact but incomplete.

If any characters search the computer room they will find little other than the mercenaries' equipment. The only other things in the room are discarded printouts from the hardcopy machine and a stuffed toy in the shape of a green, felt dragon.

13. The Computer Archives

The cardlock and door to this room have been shot away by laser fire. If the party have not already encountered mercenaries 2 and 3 in the computer office (room 11) they will be in here.

Two men are busily pulling computer printouts and data storage modules from the shelves where they are normally housed. They are throwing the data modules to the floor and stamping on them. The computer printouts are being scattered in a random fashion. Neither man has noticed you.

These two mercenaries (Nos 2 and 3) will fight with confidence if given the opportunity, knowing that reinforcements are in the computer room (room 12). If firing does break out, Fiona Talenc and the other mercenaries will investigate and attack the party from behind.

If these mercenaries have already been encountered in the computer office the room will be disorganised, and most of its contents scattered and destroyed.

The computer printouts are still readable, though several have large bootprints on

them. The contents relate to maintenance schedules, short reports on APF company finances and listings of all the programs on the computer. If the party takes these listings, the Referee should decide if they are saleable. The value of the listings is 15% of the cost given for computer programs in the Expanded rules.

The computer data modules in the room have been destroyed to a large extent. There were 57, and each of these has a 5% chance of surviving its mistreatment intact. In no circumstances will more than four modules be intact. Although there is no way of determining the information contents of a particular module, the Referee should decide whether these modules, and their contents, are saleable to an APF competitor (eg Sunpower Inc). The Referee should also determine their value — and what Kejganokh's reaction is to the theft of potentially valuable information.

If the party decide to plant separate explosive charges in here, anyone with Demolitions skill will require only 100g of Tornadium D-19 to destroy the contents of the room. As noted in the description of the computer room, the archives and contents will be destroyed by a large explosion in there.

III. And Finally....

Back at Triad Low Starport the party will find the cybot waiting for them with the remainder of their fee. The cybot will also give each of them a journey class ticket to Gran Quivera in Prenglar. The starship that they are valid for leaves the next morning.

Experience Points

Once the adventure is complete the Referee should award the characters experience points. Those who used their abilities and skills with imagination and foresight should receive four experience points. Those who played constructively should receive three experience points. Characters whose performance was only average should receive two experience points. Those who merely 'went along for the ride' should receive only one point.

CREDITS

Design and Text: John Tantoblin
Cartography: Paul Ruiz
Artwork: Simon Senior
The Dralasite
in the Dirty Bucket: Graeme Morris

Portions of this mini-module were used at GamesDay '82 and Northern Games Day '83. Thanks to all those who participated (even Ian Marsh!).

Pre-Generated Characters

Name	STR/STA	DEX/RS	INT/LOG	PER/LDR	IM	RW	M
Princod D	55/50	40/40	50/40	40/50	4	30	20
Skills: Beam Weapons 1, Medical 2, Psycho-social 1							
Farlih V	60/50	45/55	55/55	50/45	6	43	33
Skills: Projectile Weapons 2, Melee Weapons 1, Computer 1							
L N Glascock	50/60	55/65	35/25	40/40	7	38	48
Skills: Gyrojet Weapons 1, Melee Weapons 2, Technician 1							
Dovercourt	45/45	45/55	45/45	50/50	6	33	23
Skills: Projectile Weapons 1, Demolitions 2, Technician 1							

Notes: D = Dralasite, V = Vrusk

The following characters are provided for use with the module. The Referee may give these to the players or use them for comparison purposes with any characters the players may wish to use.

Each character owns a Civilian Skeinsuit (Princod has a fully charged Inertia Screen). L N Glascock owns a vibroknife with 2 SEU in the powerclip. All the characters have Cr.10 — Cr.20 in change.

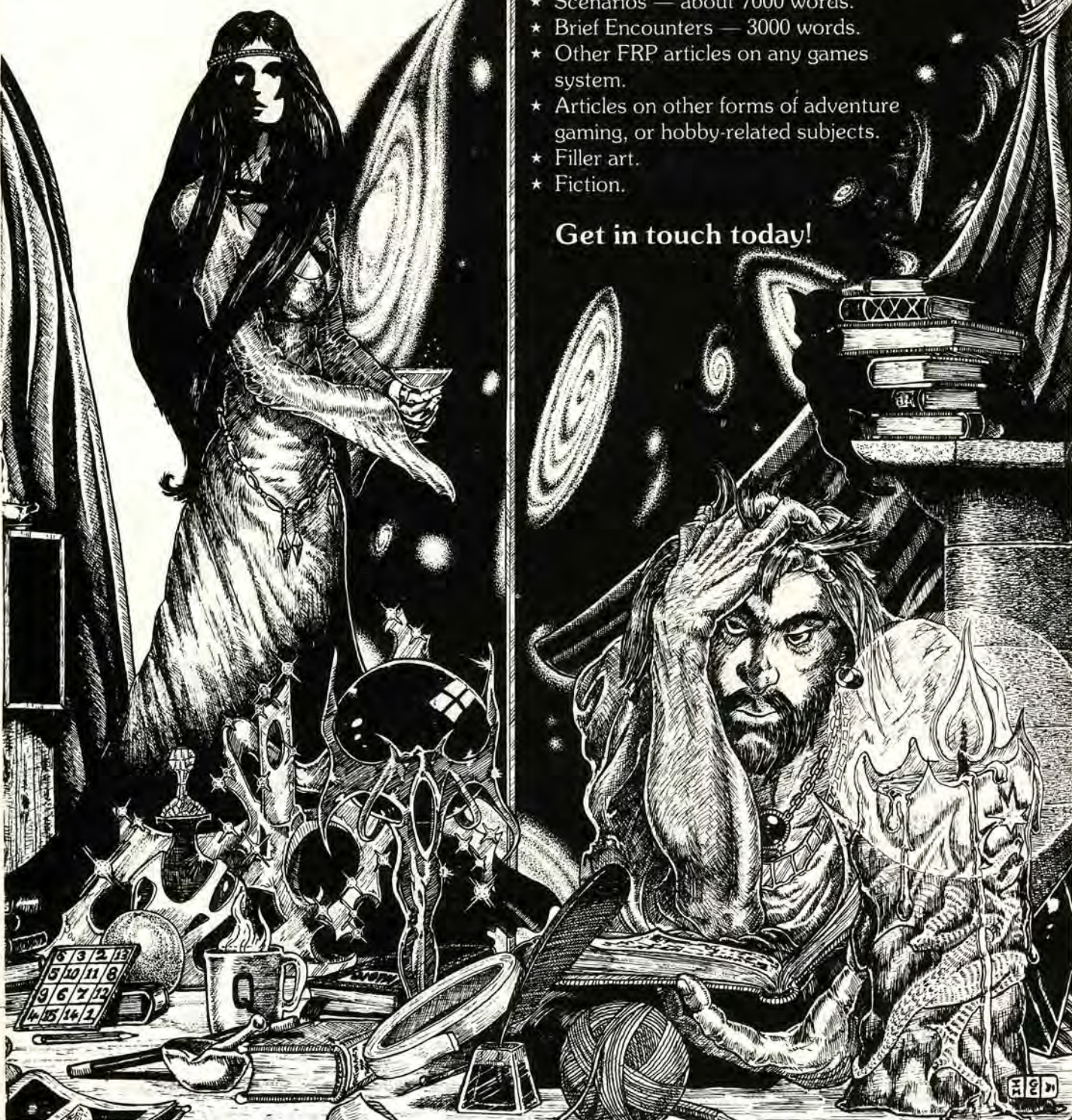
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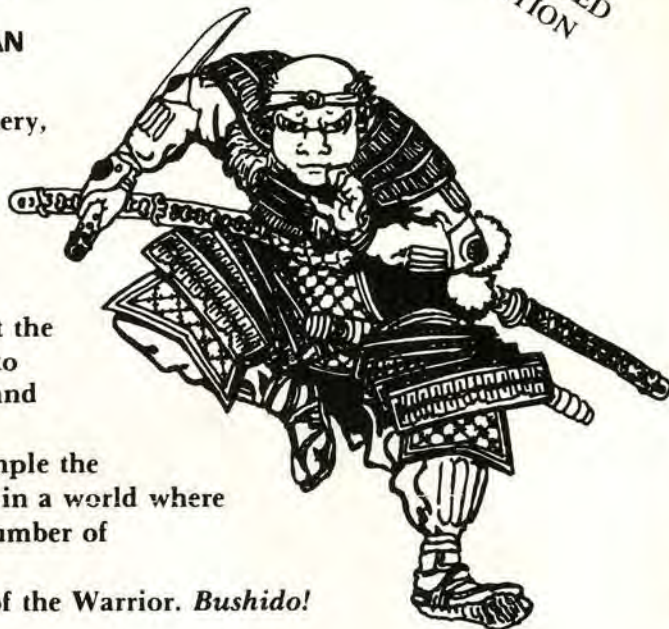
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SPECIAL PA OFFERS

Please note that the following offers are available **only** to members of the D&D® Players Association. Details of the PA and how to join are given on page 33 of this magazine.

BARGAIN BASEMENT

The Bargain Basement (lair of the infamous Karen) is the place where we consign all the stock which, for some reason or other, can no longer be sold as 'perfect'. The degree of imperfection varies from a missing shrink-wrap to the lack of a page in a module, for example. The items all have two things in common, however, they are all on sale at amazingly reduced prices and none of them is rubbish.

PA members can obtain an up-to-date list of available Bargain Basement items by sending an S.A.E. to Bargain Basement at the address given below. Don't forget to quote your PA membership number.

RPGA™ Module 1 — RAHASIA

A 16-page D&D module designed for 5-8 characters of levels 1-2. Price £2.00, post free.

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'R SERIES' MODULES

The 'R series' AD&D™ adventure modules are produced by the RPGA™ organisation in the USA and are available in the UK only to PA members. Each of the modules was designed for use in a GEN CON® tournament and is suitable for normal campaign play as well as having extra details and pre-rolled characters for tournament-style use.

R1 - TO THE AID OF FALX

A 16-page module designed for 6 characters of levels 5-9. Price £1.50, post free.

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R2 - THE INVESTIGATION OF HYDELL

A 32-page module designed for 5 characters of 5th level. Price £2.00, post free.

Slinks are obedient, semi-human slaves and are apparently content with their lot. They are protected by law, owned by the wealthy and approved of by the church authorities. Can you sneak into the old ruins to find out who or what slinks really are and where they come from?

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A 32-page module designed for 5-8 characters of level 5-9. Price £2.00, post free.

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PAN BACK ISSUES

It always happens. No sooner does a magazine come to an end than its back issues become collector's items. PA members can obtain back issues of PANs 1-12 for £0.50 each or £5.00 for a set of 12, post free.

Offers are open to PA members only. Orders to: PA Special Offers, TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD.

Remember to include your PA membership number when ordering. All offers made subject to availability.

D&D® PLAYERS ASSOCIATION NEWS



THE NEWSLETTER
OF THE BRITISH
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®
PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

PAN PIPINGS

First, a small announcement — TSR Hobbies (UK) Ltd is no more, non plus, kaput! However, don't start saving your pennies for a condolence card, the demise is purely cosmetic. As of now ('now' being some time ago, if you follow my meaning) the dear old firm shall be known as TSR UK Ltd (no brackets, no 'Hobbies'). This will not only have the effect of confusing you, us, our customers, the bank and the Inland Revenue, but also saves a considerable quantity of ink. Furthermore, it brings us into line with TSR in the USA who are now simply TSR Inc. However, there are no prizes for spotting how many times we get it wrong over the next few months (or years!).

RPGA™ MODULE 1 — RAHASIA

You may have noticed this addition to the list of products available to PA members and may also be wondering why its coding does not follow on in the 'R' series. The reason is fairly simple — it's a D&D® adventure, unlike the 'R' modules which are for the AD&D™ game. It comes from the combined pens of Tracy and Laura Hickman who have displayed in it their apparent penchant for 'the mystic East' which first came to light in I3 ('Pharaoh') and I4 ('Oasis of the White Palm' — which Tracy wrote with Philip Meyers).

The module is the latest offering from the RPGA™ team. Packed into its 16 pages and cover folder are a background rationale for the adventure, 49 encounter areas, three new monsters (the bone golem, haunt and water weird), DM's maps, tear-out players' map and pre-rolled character roster. I was particularly taken by the idea of Arab/Islamic elves. The artwork is nice (and relevant to the action) as are the maps. Overall, not a bad two quids' worth.

At this point, I must insert a disclaimer on behalf of the sales department since, at the time of writing, the new module is barely a twinkle in their collective eyes. We have had a few review

copies in, but the rest have only just been ordered from the US. Assuming that we are lucky, that the modules are not washed overboard in mid-Atlantic and that they are not confiscated by British Customs then they will be available when this issue reaches you. If not, please be patient.

MILL DAYS

And now, the column that immortalized the Clandestine Karen, brings you a new goddess... the Celestial Sandra! It is her lot in life to take care of, amongst other things, correspondence about Mill Days. It seems that much of the mail she has been receiving is from people who have no idea what a Mill Day is. In the hope of saving Sandra some letter-writing, here is a quick explanation.

Mill Days are a long-established tradition for TSR. The idea of them to allow us to play host to all-day games sessions here at our Cambridge offices (hence the name). The games played vary considerably. Sometimes Mill Days are used to play-test a new TSR/IMAGINET™ magazine module, at others we are pleased to accept the offer of a PA member to run something. Any volunteers? To keep things comfortable, we restrict the number of players to between eight and ten and so places at Mill Days must be booked — and then only by PA members.

We usually start at about 10am on a Saturday and play through (with a break for lunch) until about 5pm. Mill Days are free and we provide light refreshments, but not lunch or travel costs.

After a summer break, the next two Mill Days will be on September 10th and October 29th. Interested? If so, write to:

Players Association Mill Days, TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD

I got the name right that time anyway....

Graeme Morris

DISPEL CONFUSION



Dispel Confusion is a question and answer column intended to help hobby gamers overcome problems they have had with game rules.

At present, we can only help with games produced by TSR; while our answers may not be fully 'official', we have contact with the designers themselves. In future, we hope to cover games other than TSR products, by getting answers from those who make and design them.

But we always need questions, so send your queries to:- Players Association (Dispel Confusion), TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games

Q. Why are more questions in Dispel Confusion about the Advanced D&D® game than about the Basic game?

A. We receive fewer questions about the Basic game. However, this only raises the question of why this should be so. In general the Basic and Expert systems are designed to be flexible and are deliberately not comprehensive. As a result, the answer to many questions is made up on the spot by the DM.

The Advanced game is far more codified and extensive. It is therefore inevitable that there will be apparent

inconsistencies or deficiencies which can be rectified in the Dispel Confusion column.

Q. How do you combine a fighter's multiple attacks per round with a weapon that gets more than one attack per round? (Advanced)

A. You don't. Only missile weapons have multiple attacks, and the 'Attacks per Round' table (**Players Handbook** p25) states 'with any thrusting or striking weapon' — not missile weapons.

Note that the rule at the bottom of the same page, referring to the 'one attack per level' rule for fighting creatures with less than one hit die, replaces the 3/2 or 2/1 attack rule; they do not combine to give 1 1/2 or 2 attacks per level.

Q. Can a creature with a gaze weapon attack more than one target per round? Is it possible to use both the gaze weapon and natural or melee weapons in the same round? (Basic/Advanced)

A. A gaze weapon will only affect one victim per round, but this attack form is in addition to any other attacks given. A basilisk, for example, can gaze and bite in the same round.

Q. Why must bards have scores of only 15 or better in strength, wisdom, dexterity and charisma when a fighter

who changes to a thief must have a minimum dexterity of 17 and a minimum strength of 15? (Advanced)

A. The obvious answer to this question is that bards are not fighters who change into thieves and then into bards. Bards are characters who have spent a period of training under the auspices of the fighter and thief classes, and then enter into bardic training under druidic tuition. A character wishing to be a thief proper needs to be well suited to this specialised class. The abilities of bards are wider ranging and require overall competence rather than specialised excellence.

For the number crunchers amongst you, the probability of a character having abilities suitable for bardhood is far less than the chance of being able to move from fighter to thief.

Q. Can an elf become a split class assassin? eg fighter/assassin (Advanced)

A. No. The split classes listed on p32-33 of the **Players Handbook** are those suited to the tendencies of the races concerned. No other split classes are possible.

Q. If demons, devils, and evil creatures are so strong and numerous, what can prevent Evil destroying Good at a single stroke? (Basic/Advanced)

TURNBULL TALKING



The 'realism debate' has been around for almost as many years as the hobby itself. Perhaps its origins go no further back in time than H G Wells' *Little Wars* (or maybe chess was accused of lack of realism centuries ago) but it certainly found an excitable and articulate platform soon after the arrival of the early board wargames.

Broadly speaking, the proponents of the 'realism in games' lobby want their games to be as close as possible to the real life situation they echo. Wargamers of this persuasion stop short of hauling out a Mauser and letting their opponent have one between the eyes — and indeed wargamers are often, in my experience,

pacifist people — but would like to see every last detail represented within the physical limitations of their game.

Equally broadly speaking, those of the opposite viewpoint put their enjoyment first and realism well down the list. A game can be the wildest (well, at least reasonably wild) approximation to reality and still be vastly enjoyable. Whether the Order of Battle in the **SINAI**® game is accurate or not, whether the railroads in **Rail Baron** follow historically accurate routes or not, whether the property dealings in **Monopoly** accurately reflect what happens in the normal world — these matters are largely irrelevant in comparison with the game's potential for entertainment.

And there is, of course, a lot of middle ground between the extreme positions, but he who enters this middle ground might be surprised at the volume of shot passing overhead.

One possible response is — so what? If a person enjoys a game, isn't that sufficient

in itself without delving into the innermost reasons? Psychologists (mainly the amateur variety) appear to delight so much in digging out abstruse explanations that they run a serious risk of producing evidence which isn't there in the first place. I vaguely recall reading about some lengthy research into the profound sexuality of a popular (in my view, rightly so) children's book; the author must have been pretty bewildered to discover the deeply offensive sexual nature of the writing, when he (or she) thought he was simply writing a book for children. Wargames and fantasy role-playing games are popular candidates for this sort of unhelpful, misleading and gratuitous attention — and here were we, thinking we were simply enjoying playing games.

But many gamers are unwilling to leave it at that. Perhaps simply for our own curiosity, we would like to know where we stand in this debate, and why. Perhaps our opinion on the matter is being coaxed by other members of the games group or club. Perhaps knowledge

- A. Many of the powerful, evil creatures are confined to their own planes, where, of course, they are dominant. Secondly, they spend much of their time fighting among themselves for pre-eminence. And finally the 'Cosmic Balance' does not allow Evil or Good to become all powerful.

DRAGONQUEST™ Game Questions

The following questions and answers are based on the second edition of the DRAGONQUEST™ Rules.

- Q. Rule 8.6 says 'A character may expend 100 Experience Points (rather than the usual cost of 1000) to acquire any one skill at Rank 0.' However, it is only the healer skill which requires 1000 Experience Points for Rank 0. Can another skill be acquired at 1/10 its usual cost in Experience Points?
- A. No. The idea of rule 8.6 is to allow starting characters to have a ranked skill. This skill always costs 100 Experience Points, regardless of the normal points cost. A character may only acquire one skill in this way, representing early, pre-adventuring training.

The wording of rule 8.6 is a hangover from the first edition rules, where all skills cost 1000 Experience Points at Rank 0.

- Q. Time keeping is a very important part of running a DRAGONQUEST™ campaign, especially for character Aspects, Rituals and some Lunar associated creatures (eg Wraiths). How can it be kept track of easily?

- A. We recommend the use of a good diary (preferably last year's — it's cheaper!). Choose one which gives details of the phases of the Moon, festival days (eg Halloween, Walpurgisnacht), Saints' days, etc and simply record the actions of your characters in it.

- Q. Rule 28.1 states that the damage inflicted by certain spells is counted against either the Fatigue or Endurance of its victim in the same way as damage from physical combat — ie by Damage Check. However, rule 18.4 implies that magical damage only ever applies to fatigue. Which is correct?

- A. Both are correct. It is only spells whose effects are entirely magical (eg College of Sorceries of the Mind S-4, Spell of Molecular Disruption) which affect Fatigue only. It is spells which cause physical agencies to harm victims (eg College of Air Magics S-6, Spell of Ice Projectiles) which are treated in a similar way to physical attacks.

 **Graeme Morris
& Mike Brunton**

of one's own likes and dislikes on this score helps in selecting a new game from reviews or shop shelves. Or perhaps it would be helpful to find another gamer of similar views so that the game itself can be enjoyed without this sort of distraction.

My own thoughts on the topic end up as quite simple. If it is a choice between two camps I will join the 'playability' people for their objectives are attainable whereas those of the 'realists' are not. It seems to me that either a game is an attempt to echo some aspect or other of human interaction (a wargame, a town planning game, a hotel management game or whatever) or it isn't (a fantasy role-playing game, any one of dozens of abstract games and so forth).

If the latter, the 'realism' argument can't apply — a game simply can't be realistic if the subject matter doesn't exist in reality. Those who debate at earnest length the alleged realism, or lack of it, of combat in a fantasy role-playing game should perhaps reflect that the magical elements of the game are nothing more than

fantasy. There's not much point in arguing about the fine tuning of a car engine if you can't put fuel into the thing.

But if the game is some reflection of human interaction, the only way to get an accurate and realistic simulation is to put away the game and enact the actuality. Which tends to be difficult or dangerous or illegal or fatal or unpalatable — sometimes all of them. Human interaction is complex stuff; we see it all day and have ample proof of the thesis. To abstract even parts of it is difficult enough if a satisfying game is to emerge, as any designer would agree. In the end, there must be some sacrifice of realism because its simulation is impossible or hopelessly muddles the game (often both).

I find myself returning again and again to the same basic belief — the gaming hobby is fun, and it's there for enjoyment. Hang the realism — give me a game I can enjoy any time.

 **Don Turnbull**

PA MEMBERSHIP

The PA is a club for all players of role playing games particularly the D&D® and AD&D™ games. Since it was founded in 1981, the PA has become the country's largest D&D club, and now has this 4-page section in IMAGINE™ magazine. The benefits of membership include:

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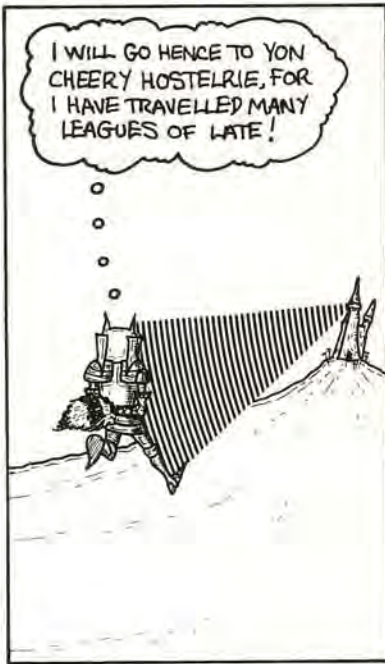
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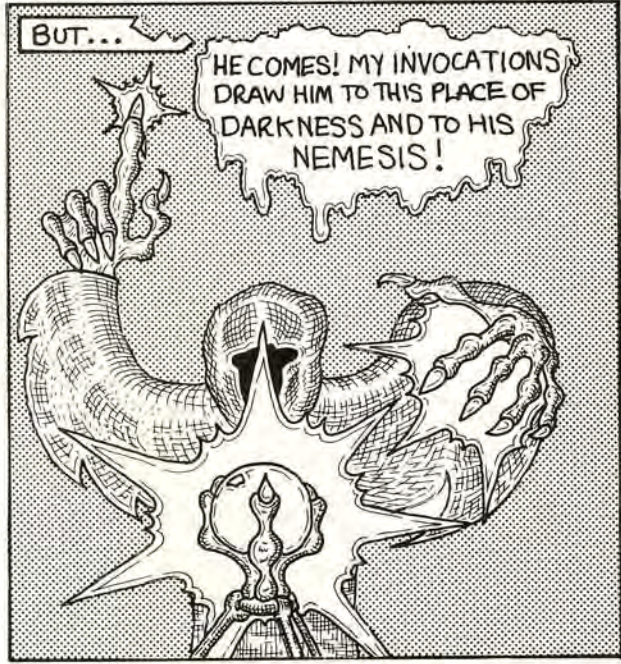
14



PANT METHINKS I HAVE PANT BESTED YON BARBARIAN IN THE RACE PANT THOUGH IT COST ME AN ACCOUTREMENT OR TWO!



I WILL GO HENCE TO YON CHEERY HOSTELLIE, FOR I HAVE TRAVELLED MANY LEAGUES OF LATE!

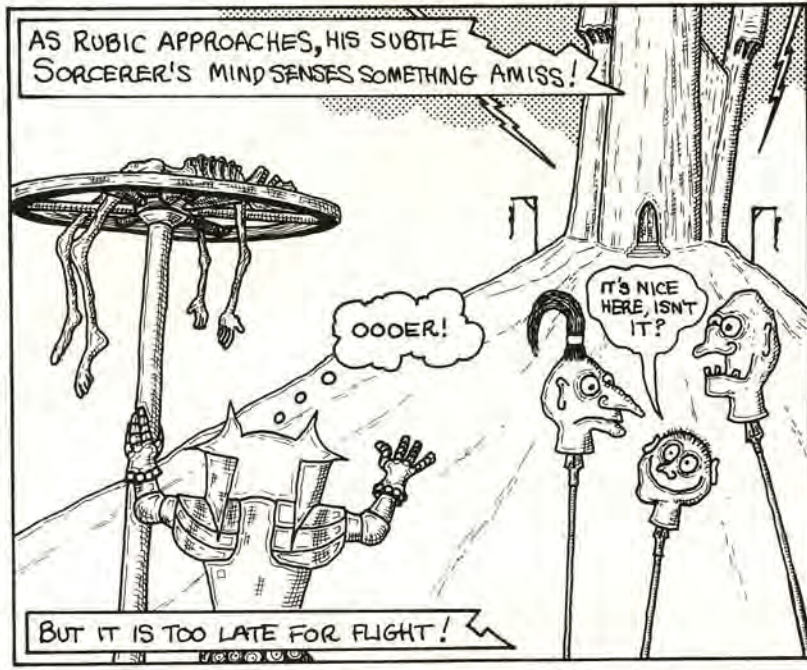


BUT... HE COMES! MY INVOCATIONS DRAW HIM TO THIS PLACE OF DARKNESS AND TO HIS NEMESIS!

RUBIC OF MOGGEDON

FOR NOT ALONE DID SKILL AT ARMS LEND RUBIC VICTORY. TO STRENGTH AND VALOUR YET HE ADDED THAT WHICH MOST OF ALL SET FOLK TO WHISPERING HIS NAME WITH AWE. HIS VERY WORDS HAD POWER TO HOLD AND QUELL WHO DARED TO STAND AGAINST HIM, AND IN THE LAYS HIS MIGHT AS SORCERER IS SUNG BESIDE HIS SKILL AS SWORDSMAN.

— THE CHRONICLES OF MOGGEDON —



AS RUBIC APPROACHES, HIS SUBTLE SORCERER'S MIND SENSES SOMETHING AMISS!

OOOER!

IT'S NICE HERE, ISN'T IT?

BUT IT IS TOO LATE FOR FLIGHT!



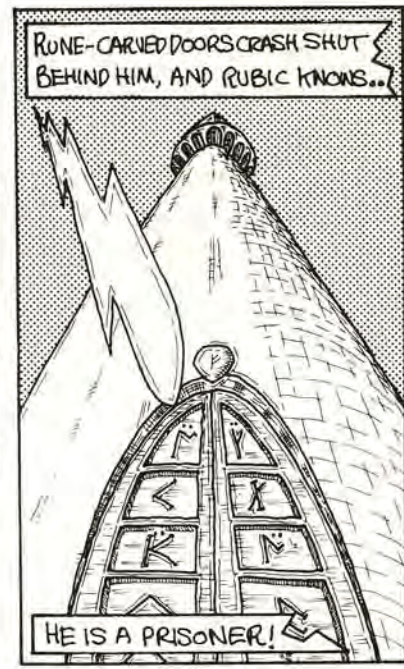
DESPITE HIS EFFORTS TO PIT HIS MIGHT AGAINST THEM, DARK FORCES * DRAW RUBIC IRRESISTABLY TOWARDS THE TOWER!

CLUTCH!

Snap!

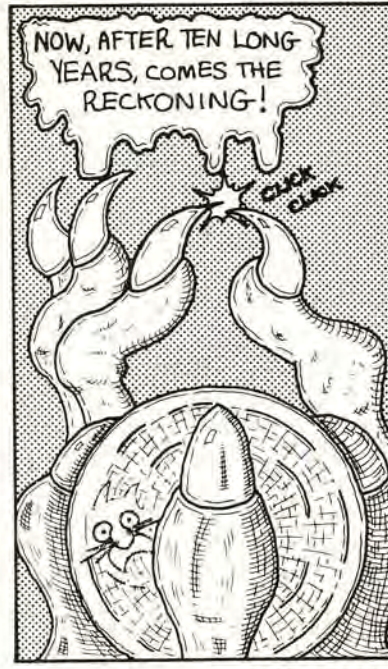
MORON!

* KNOWN TO THE ELVES AS L X S A N K N M I P : ~



RUNE-CARVED DOORS CRASH SHUT BEHIND HIM, AND RUBIC KNOWS...

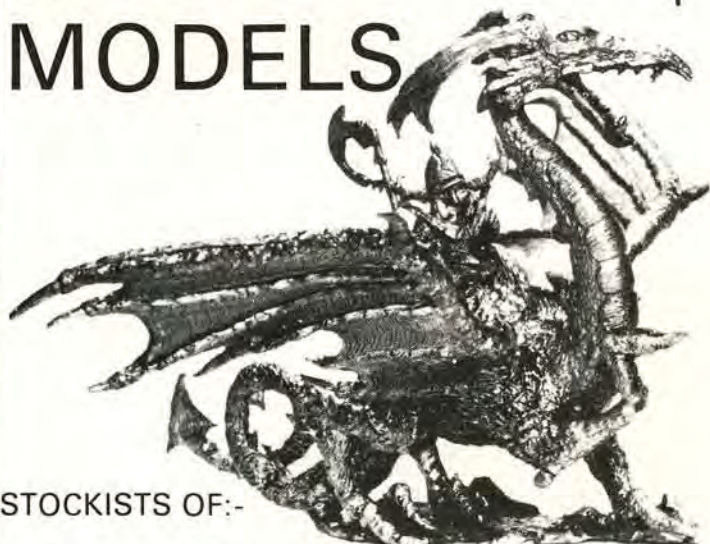
HE IS A PRISONER!



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Film Review

This month Colin Greenland reviews two recently-released science fiction films: *The Dark Crystal* and *Q — The Winged Serpent*.

In another world at another time, the evil Skeksis rule from the castle of *The Dark Crystal* (Universal). The crystal itself was damaged a thousand years ago, which perverted its power and blighted the land. A prophesy tells that all will be well again when the missing shard is restored by a member of the elflike Gelfling. The Skeksis have no intention of being deposed by the forces of good, so they have attempted to wipe out the Gelflings, but missed one, Kira, who survives in the village of the hobbitish Podlings, and another, Jen, who is brought up by the peaceful Mystics.

The story of the *Dark Crystal* and Jen's quest to repair it is not very original. There are plenty of echoes from *The Lord of the Rings* and for that matter from the Bible. What makes the film so entertaining is the team behind it. It is essentially a Muppet movie, directed by Jim Henson and Frank Oz — there are no human characters at all. Co-producer with Henson is Gary Kurtz of *Star Wars*, and there is a credit of special thanks to Alan Garner, author of *Elidor* and *The Owl Service*, who perhaps lent his expertise on all things dark and mythical.

But more important than any of these is Brian Froud, whose 'conceptual designs' have been fleshed, furred, feathered and fanged to perfection. The Skeksis are wizened creatures halfway between vultures and reptiles, and Froud has avoided the common mistake of making all the members of his alien race identical: every Skeksi has its own repellent features and character. They are so bad, they crumble into dust the minute they die. Equally menacing are their bestial heavies, the Garthim, gigantic black things that combine the nastiest bits of beetle, crab and spider, clattering and bristling with pincers and legs.

The *Dark Crystal* is a technical masterpiece with splendid special effects work by a team two dozen strong. It may be that they did well to keep the story simple and then lavish a wealth of detail on it, rather than go for a more complicated fantasy and fail. The best scene is an early one in which Jen, carrying the all-important shard of crystal, is lost in the jungle. He is soon to be rescued by Kira, who, like Tarzan and Dr Doolittle, can call the animals to her aid; but before she turns up Jen has to wander among the most marvellously eerie and gruesome hybrids of plant and animal, all green and lush and sticky.

Also green and gruesome is *Q — The Winged Serpent* (ITC). Q stands for Quetzlcoatl, so be grateful they have abbreviated it. Quetzlcoatl was an ancient Mexican sun-god, fond of live sacrifices, and so not very convenient in the middle



Lee Majors and Lauren Hutton star with Hal Linden and Ray Milland in *Starflight One* — a kind of *Airport* in space. Can the crew and passengers of *Starflight One* be saved from certain death? An Orion Picture, on general release from the end of May.

of Manhattan, where a fanatic Aztec revivalist cult have prayed it back into existence. A hard-pressed police team think that a sudden spate of ritual murders and disappearing window cleaners is a separate case from crank reports of a 'giant bird' over the city, until the laconic Detective Shepard (David Carradine) puts two and two together and gets Q for an answer.

The creature itself is a bit creaky, though good in close-up — but why, after all the Aztec preamble, doesn't it have any feathers? Inadequate communication, perhaps, between the special effects unit, Lost Arts Inc, and Larry Cohen, who masterminded everything else in the way of writing, producing and directing. The whole story is largely incoherent, in fact, and the film shows every sign of having been hastily edited down to fit an hour and a half. But, unlike the extravagant wildlife of *The Dark Crystal*, the monster is only secondary in this monster movie. The central character is not Quetzlcoatl, or even its nemesis Shepard, but an

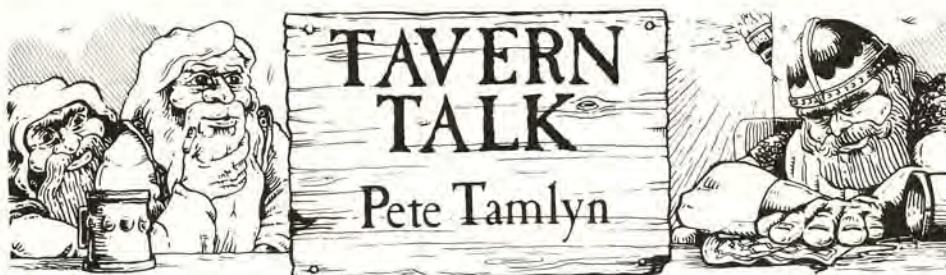
endearing and incompetent small-time crook, pianist and ex-junkie, Jimmy Quinn, exquisitely played by Michael Moriarty. Running away from a jewel robbery he did not even want to commit, Moriarty stumbles over a nest, complete

with an outside egg, eighty floors up in the spire of New York's decorative Chrysler Building. The realisation that he is the only person who knows the whereabouts of the creature's lair goes to Quinn's head, with amusing and even touching results. Watch out for Candy Clark from Nic Roeg's *The Man who Fell to Earth* as Quinn's girlfriend Joan.

It is not often that a film is enjoyable as a monster movie, a character study and a satire, but *Q — The Winged Serpent* scores on every one. As well as taking a few swipes at the police, the mass media, and big city politics, Larry Cohen cannot resist poking fun at the innumerable monsters that have gone chomping and stomping among the skyscrapers over the years. As Police Captain Fletcher observes, 'New York is famous for good eating'.

Colin Greenland

Colin will be back in issue 6. Next month Dave Pringle reviews some of the latest releases from the world of books.



Well, you'll all be pleased that I'm now fully recovered from GamesFair, won't you? Oh, all right then, have it your own way, but I'm still here regardless.

That was imaginary feedback, of course, but with issue one having been out for almost a month now I've actually had a little of the real thing. Not much, I grant you, but this appears to have been mainly my fault as the typical reaction to Tavern Talk 1 has been 'you didn't say much, did you?' Ah well, let's hope that the last couple of issues have been better. Please do write; this is supposed to be a fan column, not a personal pulpit, and I won't know what you want discussed unless you tell me.

Still on the subject of feedback, one of the functions of this column is to bring up those topics which might never get an airing through normal channels. Now it so happens that just such a topic has been an almost universal reaction to IMAGINE™ magazine. Everyone I've spoken to has made some wisecrack about the profusion of ®, ™ and © marks that are attached to every TSR product name. It gets to me as well, and I deliberately leave them out of my copy to see if Paul is on his toes. What little experience I have of copyright leads me to suspect that in this case it is the Law that is the ass rather than the company. Perhaps we could have an official explanation, as the matter seems to bring TSR more bad press than anything else I can think of.

With an elegance of linking born of years of experience editing a fanzine letter column, I now move to another use of the Tavern. I recently received a circular from John and Ian McKeown, editors of a fairly new FRP 'zine called **Miser's Horde**. They suggested setting up some sort of organisation to ensure that there was always a fanzine stall at major gaming conventions, where any amateur publisher could have his wares sold, whether he could make it to the convention or not. This idea is obviously born out of the excellent work that Mike Lewis and Simon Billenness did getting a fanzine stall for Games Days. Personally I think that an official organisation is both unnecessary and inadvisable and the matter would be best handled by the current editor of **20 Years On**. Unfortunately I haven't had time to get in touch with anyone about it before my deadline and it will probably all have been settled by the time this sees print, but at least I can exercise my talents at prophecy

and point out that such operations can and will be publicised through this column. So, let us begin by announcing that there will be a stall at **Dragonmeet**, which I have only just heard will be on Saturday 16th July, at the Central Hall, Westminster. Information concerning the arrangements for this year's London Games Day should be forthcoming in a couple of months time.

Another means of publicising 'zines at present unused by the FRP community is the Postal Gaming Hobby's 'Zine Bank. The idea behind the Bank is that editors send unwanted back issues of their 'zines to the Bank custodian who can then send out packages of samples to interested parties. This does have the drawback that the samples received are often somewhat out of date, but the customer can get to see a large number of different 'zines for very little effort. To keep administration simple the Bank does not charge for the individual 'zines, only for postage, so you have to write off the cost of those issues to advertising expenses, but then who ever sells back issues anyway? Anyone wishing to get some samples from the Bank (although I remind you that there are very few 'zines dealing with FRP there at present) should send £1, a brief list of gaming interests and, most importantly, a *very large* (A4 or foolscap) envelope to: The 'Zine Bank, c/o Alan Parr, 6 Longfield Gardens, Tring, Herts, HP23 4DW. Anyone wishing to deposit 'zines should either send them to Alan or wait until the next big convention and give them to Alan or me: one of us is bound to be there.

This issue should reach you in plenty of time to remind those of you who receive postal games fanzines to vote in the 'Zine Poll. Full details should be in the hobby news pages (p44) so I won't repeat them here, but I will comment that Richard Walkerdine's surprise decision to open the Poll to 'zines that don't run Diplomacy has been met with an heartwarming degree of approval from the hobby at large. Most FRP 'zines still aren't eligible as they don't run any games, just talk about them, but I suspect that their turn will come eventually. And, of course, **Dragonlords** is eligible (not to mention **Acolyte** which I won't in case anyone thinks I'm campaigning). With DL, the sports games 'zines and Alan Parr's excellent **Hopscotch** all newly eligible, the results will be more interesting than they have been for years.

 Pete Tamlyn

The current spate of new modules for the D&D® and AD&D™ games continues – including TSR's first invisible ink solo module...

M1

Not only is this TSR's first solo module for D&D® (quite an event in itself), it is also the first Invisible Ink module. Before finding out what that means, let us take a quick canter through the components. You get the usual booklet (32 pages) of descriptions, instructions, maps, pre-generated characters, and so on. This is protected by a standard thin card wrap, the outside of which sports a good quality illustration. The inside has several maps of small sections of a dungeon printed on it. Back to the outside and we find that there is a pen attached to it by a strip of velcro. This is your Invisible Ink pen.

The module is intended for use as a solo adventure for thieves of levels 1-3 only. A pre-generated character is provided but a player is quite at liberty to use one of his/her own existing thieves if this is preferred. A modified adventure for DM moderated group play is provided in which case any major character class may be used.

The system will be familiar to anyone who has used other solo adventures or perhaps the **Endless Quest** books. There are 309

14

OASIS

This module is the second in the **DESERT OF DESOLATION** series and like its forerunner, **13 — Pharaoh**, is a tough test for players. It may seem hard on the poor dears who battled through 13 to make them suffer again, but if they want riches and fame, they must expect a little hardship. 14 can be played without first participating in 13.

Physically, **Oasis of the White Palm** is up to the high standards of Pharaoh: 32 pages of descriptions, illustrations, monsters, NPCs and diagrams with *two* card protective wraps which also have the necessary DM's maps and plans printed on them. First rate cover art is matched by the lively illustrations of the text. The module is intended for 6-8 characters of 6th to 8th levels — a balance of character classes being recommended.

There are three main areas of activity: an oasis which includes what is in effect a small village, an ancient and recently revived temple and the sinister Crypt of Badr Al-Mosak — a very dangerous place. In addition, encounters can occur during journeys in the desert between the various major areas. The players can travel where they wish and thus may experience the encounters in the 'wrong' order. It is important that players should feel that they have this freedom but the

GAMES REVIEWS

BLIZZARD PASS Invisible Ink Module

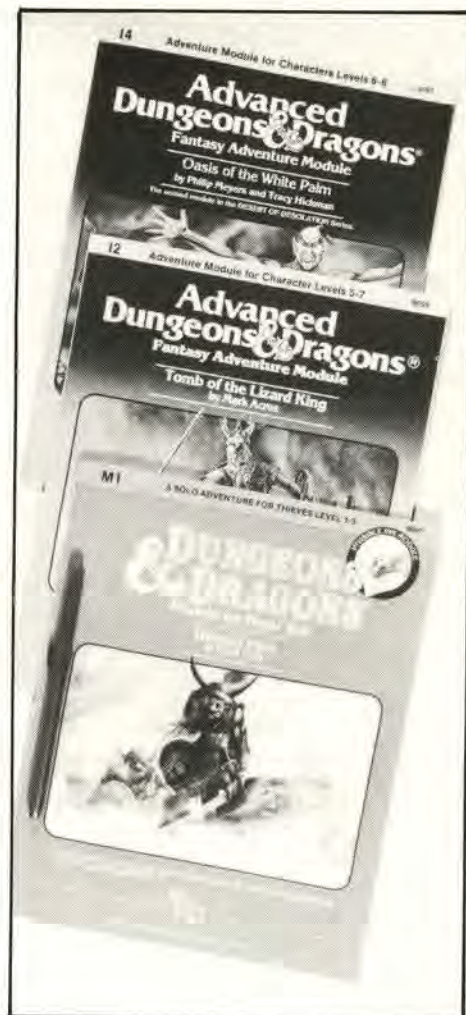
entries in the module booklet — you commence play at number 1. Each entry tells you where you are and what is happening. It then presents you with several choices of action. Depending on which you select, you are then directed to another numbered entry and so you go on. The big difference with this adventure is the Invisible Ink aspect. Nearly half the numbered entries are blank. It is necessary to rub them with the Invisible Ink pen to reveal secret writing — what fun!

When it came to playing the module, I found it very entertaining. These things are compulsive: once you start playing, you always want to go on to just one more entry. The blank spaces, awaiting your Invisible Ink pen, make it even more enticing. I did find the beginning unsatisfactory. Entry 1 gives two choices, either of which could equally be sound or foolhardy. However, if you pick the wrong one you are dead with no chance of escape. A 50/50 chance of killing off perhaps a favourite character, on what is after all just a guess, is pretty harsh. Once you get past that hurdle, however, the play is more varied and more subtle.

The use of area maps is unusual in a solo adventure, but I found them to be of little practical use. It may be nice to know what the area you are in is like, but as it is the entries that you pick which select your tactics and detailed movement, there is no real point to the maps. They are merely cosmetic.

How about the Invisible Ink idea? Well, it *is* fun, there is no denying that. Of course, the more you play, the fewer blank bits there are as an increasing number have their secrets (permanently) revealed. Still, even when they are all exposed, it is just the same as a conventional solo adventure and can still be played as such.

A few of the pages in my copy were a little reluctant to give up the secret of their invisible messages and even after vigorous rubbing, the writing was difficult to read. Frankly, the Invisible Ink aspect of the module is a gimmick but it is a hugely entertaining one which contributes to the fun of the well thought out and enjoyable solo adventure.



OF THE WHITE PALM

DM should do what he can to unobtrusively direct them in the 'correct' direction. Their chances of success are higher if the DM succeeds in doing this.

This is not a module of outlandish monsters but is nevertheless a mainstream AD&D™ adventure with plenty of treasure, traps and tricks situated principally amongst traditional room/corridor environments. Not that this is a criticism since I feel that the AD&D system is best suited to just such environments.

There are plenty of interesting goings-on between NPC individuals and groups, so that the party is placed in a dynamic society which provides them with several quite different choices of action.

The DM will need to study this module closely before running it if it is to be exploited to the full. S/he is not expected to provide any details, I am glad to say, but some of the encounters are quite complicated and so complete umpire-familiarity is required.

This is an excellent, varied module. It has excitement, depth and tension. A must for those who have played I3 and highly recommended for anyone else.

I2 — TOMB OF THE LIZARD KING

Intended as an adventure for 7-9 characters of levels 5 to 7, this module is a one-off enterprise with various encounters occurring in widely differing settings. It comprises a 32 page book with a thin card, detachable cover. Various maps intended for the DM are printed on the cover. Other maps and plans are included in the book itself. The maps are well drawn and easily understood.

The theme of the adventure will be familiar to all module users. The lands of the Count of Eor are troubled by a nameless horror and the good Count has to call in outside adventurers (the players) since his own men do not seem able to destroy the evil. Thus, after an interesting (even exciting!) initial meeting with the Count, the party will set off to try and do the business. The familiar pattern continues as the party makes its way to a once prosperous village, now sadly ruined by the Terror. Various encounters are possible en route. Finally, after deploying their adventuring talents in the vicinity of the village, the players set off to seek out the lair of the monstrous foe that is wreaking havoc in the Count's realm.

The outline of this scenario is very similar to that of N1 — **Against the Cult of the Reptile God**. The source of the villainy in the adventures has similarities as well.

The details of the two modules are quite different however. I2 has an interesting setting, good NPCs and some very dangerous underground encounters (so dangerous, the designer warns against the use of favourite existing characters.) It is well presented in the best traditions of current TSR modules. A useful list of pre-generated characters is provided in case you want to keep that prized character of yours in a bandbox for this game.

Overall, I think it is a better adventure than its N1 lookalike. I can recommend it with one reservation: if you have recently played N1 and are looking for a change of scene — look somewhere else.

Doug Cowie

M1 — Blizzard Pass (Basic module for 1 player, levels 1-3), I4 — Oasis of the White Palm (Advanced module for 6-8 characters, level 6-8) and I2 — Tomb of the Lizard King (Advanced module for 7-9 characters, levels 5-7) are published in the USA by TSR Inc. They are available in this country from TSR UK Ltd, The M71, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD and through all regular retail outlets. M1 and I4 are priced £4.50, and I2 is priced at £3.95.

STARSTONE

Published by Northern Sages, **Starstone** is a 'medieval fantasy role-playing campaign.... containing two complete scenarios for beginner characters, each consisting of Dungeon, Wilderness and Urban adventures, plus an ideal introductory adventure.' The product consists of an 18.5 by 11.75 inch, 40 page rule-book, professionally printed in small type, with but a few minor errors and a 17 by 23.5 inch folded insert sheet containing a well-organised, clear display of village maps, some detailed dwellings such as Inns and several underworld complexes. The inside covers display a detailed black and white campaign map of the region at a half-mile to the hex scale. The rules contain numerous clear illustrations in a cartoonish style.

Starstone, then, is an FRP module similar to those published by, amongst others, TSR for the D&D® games, Chaosium for **Runequest**, and Judges Guild. It is not an independent FRP game but must be used with an existing system such as those mentioned above. It claims, in fact, to be 'designed for use with *all* FRP systems.' To substantiate this, several devices have been used. Spells, artifacts and the like have been phrased in general terms such as 'minor cure', 'healing potion (3-8 damage)' and 'darkness', and it is up to the DM to translate these generalities into the specific names of the chosen game system.

Similarly, the effect of magical weapon or special hit and damage increments are described as +5% or +10% — 1 or 2 on a

d20. Non-playing characters and creatures use other conventions, being classified according to wealth, influence rating, armour rating and so on. Thus Jerli Jerlisson, a typical character, is a gnome aged 21, IL (influence level) 4; AR (armour rating) plate; CC (character class) fighter; HD (hit dice/level) 3d10; HP (hit points) 22; INC (inclination) good; MT (movement) 75', and is then fleshed out with a character sketch of his likes and dislikes.

The above shows that the claim is merely a thinly veiled disguise, for Starstone seems to have been designed primarily for use with the D&D® game. It readily adapts to the D&D game universe, and the monster types, spells, character types and characteristics, artifacts and so on, will be more familiar to a D&D game player than to one involved in, say, **Tunnels and Trolls**. Furthermore, it has the D&D FRP philosophy of having lots of magical items, off-beat and weird monster types (as well as old favourites), many spells, much treasure and plenty of reward, as opposed to the style of Chivalry & Sorcery, which stresses excruciating realism, few monsters, little magic and little wealth. Thus Starstone is only really suitable for D&D and/or closely related FRP systems with similar mechanics and philosophy, like **Empire of the Petal Throne**.

Playwise, there is a basic theme to the module. Starstone county is troubled by a secret society promoting chaos for unknown ends. The players are hired as

vigilantes to root it out and are directed to troublespots to set matters right. Yet it is not that simple, for there are a lot of goings-on — disappearances, murders, rumours — and no obvious villains. Each of the many NPCs has a character profile indicating their likes/dislikes, ambitions, deeds/misdeeds, powers, secrets, skeletons in the cupboard (literally, for some of them), giving them a life of their own. By interacting with the natives the players are provided with clues and leads to follow up and think through. There is a lot of detective work to be done, and there are plenty of riddles to solve, which 'thinking' players will enjoy. There is plenty of scope for sword-play too, the county being infested with monsters.

Each scenario has a chapter in the main plot full of its own intricate, many-levelled sub-plots, and leads onto the next chapter. The main plot is not actually solved in Starstone; players must wait for the publication of *Ristenby Town* to carry the story on. As it is, though, Starstone will provide entertainment for many evenings, is exceptional value for money (being packed with 3 or 4 times the material of similarly priced modules) and is highly recommended.

Robert Hulston

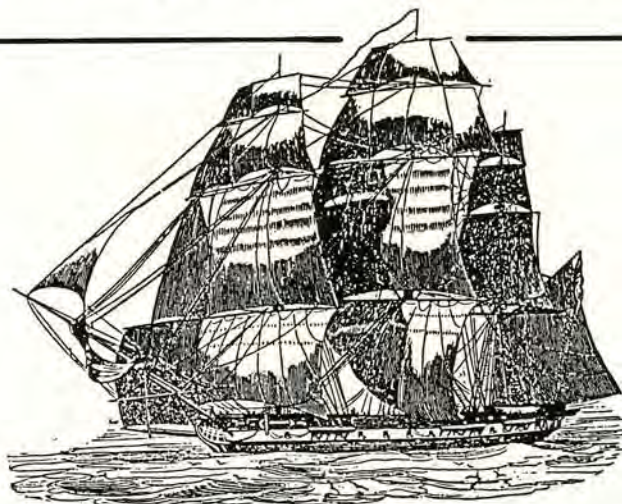
STARSTONE, consisting of a 40 page booklet, mapsheet and card cover with map, costs £2.99. Details of availability can be obtained from Northern Sages, Glen Top, Stacksteads, Bacup OL13 0NW.

SEA HAWKS

Sea Hawks by Orca games claims to be 'a game of skill and daring for 2, 3 or 4 players.' The board is a map of the Caribbean and you are to become a pirate captain, searching for a particular chest of treasure.

The winner is the first player to discover which chest contains the precious cargo by collecting treasure cards until the missing number is obvious and demonstrable — a process of elimination — and then the key chest must be in the players home port.

The emphasis of the game is on a sailing race, rather than on unprovoked piratical violence. You can attempt to wrest the key chest from an opponent by blowing him out of the water, but attacks all too easily backfire. The main restriction on senseless mayhem is that the odds are stacked clearly in favour of the defender, while it can prove quite difficult even to close with a dodging opponent. It takes daring, and the ability to be in the right place at the right time to be a fighting pirate in this game.



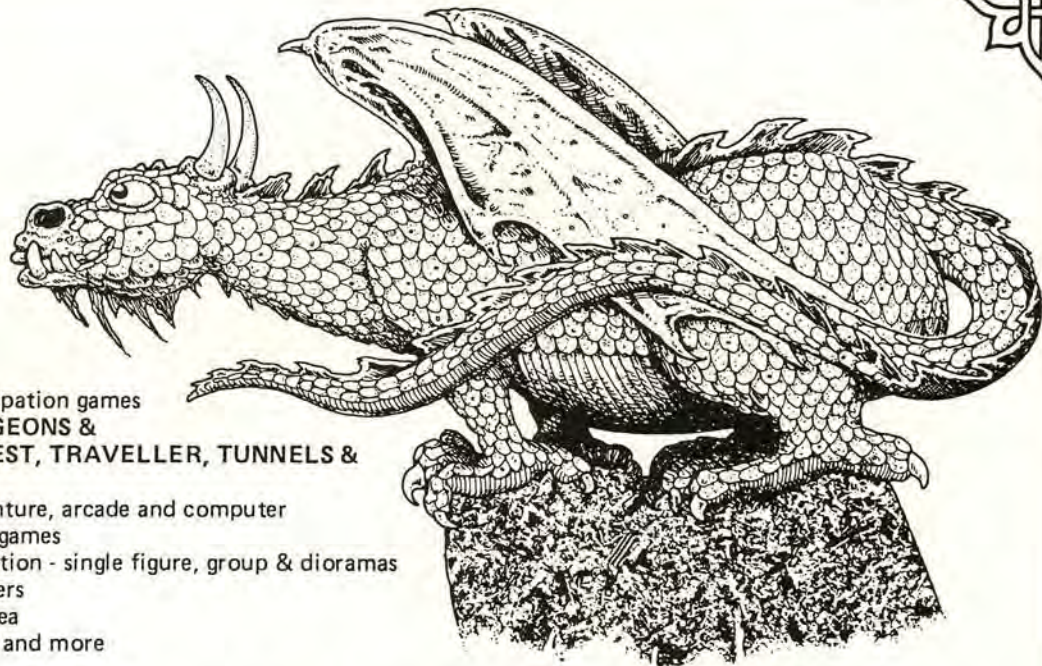
It means that the art of the game is in staying afloat despite the fate cards contained in the sailing card pack, keeping clear of more reckless players and being able to stage a good bluff. Basically the game is won or lost on the throw of a dice — one unfortunate six can see you wrecked with your treasure, or marooned by a mutinous crew.

Sea Hawks is a quickly played, easily understood and well packaged game. The board is sturdy and the playing pieces functional and attractive. Recommended

for 10 year old to adult, it is a thoughtfully designed family game which is quickly learned and playable in an hour. So hoist your mainsail, find your parrot and beware the six black spots!

Elaine Smith

Sea Hawks, a boxed game with mapboard, playing pieces, rules and dice is available from Orca Games, 5 Doking Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2LN. Price £9.95.



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TERRA II

Terra II is a brand new computer moderated game of tribal migration and conflict. It is entirely computer run with no human moderator to misinterpret your instructions. TII is run in the USA and played via ICBM's postboxing service. TII is a continuing game for any number of people; the rules cost £1.50 and a turn is £1.75 plus an SSAE. Be warned though — TII is *not* a simple game.

Two brand new games from ICBM, the people who bring you STARWEB and UNIVERSE II, the people who started the computer moderated hobby in the UK over ten years ago.

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Letters

IMAGINE™ magazine invites its readers to write on any subject that might be of interest to others. Correspondence should be addressed to IMAGINE magazine (letters), The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD. As is normal in a professional magazine, letters appearing in this column may have been edited for length.

More reaction to the first issue of this magazine. First the good news:

Tim Farlam, Maldon, Essex: I must congratulate you on your new magazine. The Beacon at Enon Tor was great and I have used it already. The article on figure painting was very useful.

D. Hallett, Thamesdown, Wiltshire: I have decided to subscribe to IMAGINE magazine because it deals with role-playing from a different viewpoint and fills a 'gap' in the market others have ignored.

Ian Lee, Upminster, Essex: I found IMAGINE magazine very useful as a DM in the D&D® game and have taken some ideas from the module into my own dungeon.

Jimmy Dodman, Leeds: I like your new magazine very much.

R. Hall, Nottingham: Congratulations on number one; it was good to see a Basic D&D dungeon. I am looking forward to seeing how the magazine develops.

M. J. Holman, Isle of Mull, Argyll: Well done. A great new magazine.

Then, there are one or two....

M. Horton and friends: Bring back the PA newsletter, separate from IMAGINE magazine. Then the PA will have some meaning.

Geof Hagan, Southport, Merseyside: I was disappointed in your first issue. DRAGON™ magazine has become so polished, I expected better from you. I am certainly not looking forward to a rehash of G.G.'s Barbarian class (*last issue*).

Module and artwork were not up to **White Dwarf's** standard, although the simplicity of presentation for the newcomer to the D&D game should be applauded.

J. P. McKeown, Upminster, Essex: You may notice that this issue (*of Miser's Horde - sent with the letter*) contains a rather harsh review of IMAGINE™ magazine. This is as much a dirge for PAN as a review, in spirit.

I have always had the same feeling of loss when adventurous magazines with a fairly small readership which give readers the feeling that they belong to a club, go public. The bulk of the criticism in my review is aimed at the fact of this change.

Bearing its wider audience in mind, IMAGINE magazine is pitched quite well, and the mass of new readers justifies the virtual reprinting of PAN pieces.

It is not a development I personally like, though it is probably good for the hobby as a whole, even if it leaves old readers out in the cold.

Laurence Williams, Worthing, Sussex: One of the original reasons I joined the Players Association was because of the newsletter, which I found interesting and informative. I had hoped that IMAGINE magazine would carry on the tradition, but when I received my copy of the first issue I was disappointed.

The 'breathtaking artwork' on the cover is one of the most badly painted pictures I have seen in years. The fiction was reasonable, but cynical in its viewpoint. The book review seemed to consist of over-priced and over-rated books. The Beacon at Enon Tor is one of the worst modules I have ever seen for any system.

Illusionary Script was fun.

I have decided to rejoin the PA so I can still buy the dungeons you import from the RPGA (*the 'R' modules*). I will buy IMAGINE magazine to receive the PA benefits, so make sure you improve this magazine. After all, you do pride yourself on serving us gamers best of all.

And betwixt the two....

Allan J. Palmer, Basingstoke: A good start, with room for improvement. I don't think there's a need for fiction in this sort of magazine; the pages devoted to John E. Black's story could have been better used on gaming features. How about a look at adventure games available on micro-computers? Perhaps an adventurers' hint column; helpful clues for adventurers lost in the Scott Adams computer adventures or those braving Infocom's ZORK series? Illuminations will be well received if it keeps us up-to-date on new products available from TSR.

The mini-module, Beacon at Enon Tor, was very good. I especially liked the fact that it could be removed from the centre of the magazine and used as a separate entity.

Glad to see PAN still lives, although I'd like to see the full page of Rubic disappear.

Games reviews are a must. Perhaps this could be expanded to include summaries of the more popular games.

Anyway, I'm convinced. I look forward to improvement to a status rivalling **White Dwarf**.

Ian Marsh, Guildford: One advantage of IMAGINE magazine is its use of fancy titles. This is something I approve of. Of the beginners' pages I accept you need things like the Beginners' Guide, but I wish game accounts would be more true-to-life, rather than the rather forced style as typified by this article.

Stirge Corner is commonsense.

It's a pity the magazine can't get away

Fanzines

Once again various magazine editors from all over the place have graced us with the latest copies of their publications. Those of their kin who have not yet made use of this unique service should note that all you have to do is keep us up to date with current issues of your fanzines - we even send you a free copy of the IMAGINE™ magazine in which the review appears!

Several 'zines appear here for the first time. **Swordplay 2** is very impressive. For 70p you get 32 pages and a posh cover, two scenarios (Traveller and AD&D™ games) and several NPCs for all FRPs. Write to Nige (if he won't tell you his name, nor will I), 8 Whitefriars Way, Sandwich, KENT CT13 9AS.

Tempestuous Orifice 2 gives part 2 of a Runequest scenario, articles on playing RPGs - Bandits, Bushido, Robots etc - and Film Reviews. Nice art. 28 pages for 50p from Patrick Fama, 15 York Close, Morden, SURREY.

Not only does RYODA print other fanzines, but Rip Gooch finds time for **Ripping Yarns 24**. 26 pages/25p from 45 St Keverne Square, Kenton Bar, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE NE5 3YF. It runs Soccer, Diplomacy and Railway Rivals.

Miser's Hoard 2 has D&D® game monsters, part 1 of an adventure, magic items and Bushido ideas. 24 pages for 50p, from John McKeown, 22 Hall Lane, Upminster, ESSEX RM14 1AF.

MISER'S HOARD



with Doug Cowie's biting style, as published in **Dragonlords**.

A Book Review page is always welcome, & this is much more readable than **White Dwarf's**.

Of PAN, Dispel Confusion was one of the most useful bits in PAN since it helped clear up so many issues. And Rubic: More, more, more. This is what I want!

Tell Pete I like the style of Tavern Talk. A good word to describe it is 'twee'. Having said that I've got to admit that the column can do nothing but good for fanzines.

I hope enough clubs continue to inform you of their operations to keep the club feature up to date.

On the whole, I am greatly impressed by the debut of **IMAGINE™** magazine, it has a 'fan' style and although its internal format could do with some improvement, on the whole everything is nicely presented.

Brian Asbury, Handsacre, Staffs: I've just read #1 and I am reasonably impressed, with your style of presentation at any rate. While some of the content left me cold (4 pages on figure painting — yawn!), I have to say that it is very readable. You have regular features and columns, but at least you're not bogged down with umpteen regular 'department' features. A magazine which has such things tends to be much the same every issue. I hope you will continue a more flexible policy, giving space to all of the major role-playing games.

I enjoyed John Black's story. Illusionary Script I can do without. Leave puzzles for puzzle magazines, please.

The dungeon was fair, but I'm surprised that no-one in the professional world has taken up the Underworld Oracle idea of including a playtest write-up. I do like the idea of the scenario being situated in the middle pages so that it can be pulled out without disturbing the rest.

News, reviews, columns etc — probably the best part of the magazine. Fan items

such as 'Tavern Talk' and the fanzine reviews make the magazine that much more friendly.

The cartoons are definitely the worst part of the magazine! I love cartoons, but these are b-a-d. 'Nic Novice', ghastly as it is, is vaguely necessary. 'Rubic' is badly drawn and unfunny. 'Alabron' is a mess. It comes across as an illustrated D&D adventure write-up, something suited to a kiddie-type fanzine. I have the suspicion that despite the half-hearted attempts at humour, Ian is trying to be serious!

IMAGINE magazine has a number of rough edges, but a lot of potential. It's already better than **White Dwarf**.



Events

First up this month comes news that **Dragonmeet** will occur on Saturday, 16 July at the Central Hall, Westminster, London.

Later in the month **Manorcon 83** is to be held at The Manor House, Bristol Road South, Northfield, BIRMINGHAM, 29-31 July. There will be Diplomacy and D&D® tournaments, not to mention games of Darts, Railway Rivals, 1829 ...and Beer-mat Flipping. The booking fee is £3, and B&B will be available at £8 per night. Enquiries to chairman Richard Gooch, 45 St Keverne Square, Kenton Bar, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 3YF (tel. 0632 861970 evenings). Bookings should be made — promptly! — via Mike Benyon, 30 Smirrels Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 9EX.

Next we have news of **Unicon**, a convention to be held the weekend of 2-4 September, at the University of Essex. Again accommodation will be available (£10/night), also special cheap train fares for convention members. Competitions will include 'all the old favourites', — although the D&D game may have to be dropped unless someone volunteers to run it...! Contact the Unicon organisers at 17 Laing Road, Colchester, Essex.

Games Day will be later than normal this year, in order to have a better chance of catching the queues in a rainstorm. It will be held in the completely refurbished Royal Horticultural Hall, Victoria, London. The date to make is 5th/6th November.

Finally, in November (11-13), there is **Midcon 83**, hosting the *official* National Diplomacy Tournament, and once again, it is to be held in Birmingham, at the Royal Angus hotel, and accommodation will be available. Registration costs £6. Full details are available, for 30p and an SAE from Chris Tringham, 204 Beulah Hill, LONDON SE19 3UX.

And just off the beaten path, **Ansible 31**, Dave Langford's SF fan newsletter keeps the readership up to date on forthcoming Cons. £2 for 8 issues from 94 London Road, Reading, BERKS RG1 5AU. Drop him a line and tell him what you thought of his story in issue 3....

20 Years On 5 contains, as usual, the complete(?) guide to fanzines and postal hobby services. Invaluable for 25p from 20 Winifred Road, Coulsdon, SURREY CR3 3JA. Simon retires in September, so 20YO will be taken on by Matt Quartermain. Good luck to him....

Psychopath 6 carries the results of the Favourite Actor/Actress/Yoghurt poll. Also letters (mine too!), reviews and El

Nabisco, Diplomacy, En Garde news. 35p for 20 pages from Mike Dean, 32 Newlands Ave, Scarborough, W. Yorks YO12 6PS.

Like the previous 2 'zines, **Acolyte 46** has a green cover. It must be spring. Games-Fair reports, reviews, letters and bits on Baja, En Garde and Diplomacy for 40p from Pete Tamlyn, 6 Broughton Close, Bierton, Aylesbury, BUCKS HP22 5DJ. It comes in two halves because Pete's stapler won't go through 38 pages.

British Fantasy Newsletter 10/4 (40p) was accompanied by **Dark Horizons 26** (65p), all part of the membership deal that costs £6 pa. BFN brings book/film reviews and other SF/Fantasy news; DH has 8

pieces of fiction and some verse! Contact Stephen Jones, 73 Danes Court, North End Road, Wembley, MIDDX. HA9 0AE.

Dave Thorby says a review of **IMAGINE** magazine will appear next issue. So **Walamalaysia Gazette 29** only carries Diplomacy and a page of news. 7p for 6 pages from 200 Lavender Hill, Enfield, MIDDX. EN2 8NJ. This review had better be worth the waiting....

Fantasy Advertiser 76 brings the usual digest of comics news, reviews and tasters in a professional package that costs just 40p. And now it has an RPG column as well! Write to Martin Lock, 3 Marlow Court, Britannia Square, Worcester WR1 3DP.

More Letters

Chris Gower, Nottingham: Kanton Du Standit, Rogue Extraordinaire, was sneaking his way through the caverns at **Blizzard Pass**. He was just thinking how nicely things were turning out when the impossible happened. One minute he was hiding in the shadows after noticing a suspicious movement near the exit to the place. The next thing he knew he was shaking off a momentary paralysis, and was about to strike again (again?) at a man he had no recollection of ever having seen before. Could this be some kind of time slip which had cast him to an indeterminate point in his near future?

After proceeding further, he continued to experience various inconsistencies, but grimly pressed on until his adventure reached its well-rewarded conclusion. However, he was far from happy. He returned to the caverns of **Blizzard Pass**, determined to find out if the things he had experienced really happened. He proved that it had all been a ghastly mistake. Once he had managed to work out how his life might have continued, it turned out to have been far less rewarding. Now what is he? Is he really as experienced as he claimed? Can he ever feel himself complete as he attempts to progress further in his chosen profession?

The explanation of Kanton's problems is a printing error in entry 247 of **Dungeon** module M1. The instructions underneath the boxes have somehow been transcribed from entry 265.

In entry 247, the instructions below the boxes should read as follows: If any number is equal to or less than your *hide in shadows* percentage, go to entry 262, if all numbers are greater, go to entry 263.

J. Alan Gilmore, Limavady, Co. Derry: I may perhaps be forgiven for saying, that what I have heard of the activities of your parent company in America, in 'taking over' SPI and reneging on all magazine

subscriptions to **S&T**, **Moves** and **Ares** there, does not exactly inspire confidence!

The 'definitive' story of the SPI takeover, at least as SPI saw it, appeared in the latest issue of S&T (91), which unfortunately is not available in this country. If sufficient people were interested, we might print extracts from the relevant article in the future. For now, let's lay one ghost to rest. TSR Inc did not 'renege' on any responsibilities. SPI were down and out, and our parent company stepped in to pick up the pieces. What matters now is the future of that company. It will continue to bring out new products - two new games are scheduled for 1983 - and S&TTM and ARESTM magazines will continue publication. We hope that gamers who enjoyed these products in the past, will continue to do so in the future.

A few words in #1 upset an even more fanatical interest group.

F. Fritz, Hampton Hill, Middlesex: Scanning your articles, I chanced upon 'Car Wars' (*Illuminations*, page 15). Whether this article was meant to be taken seriously or as satire I do not know, but I abhorred the paralleling of 'real psychopaths' and 'bike gangs'.

I am a biker and have come to expect this kind of rubbish from naive people. Please rectify this injustice. I ride with bikers and only a few are psychopaths (they are the ones who eat my models). I have introduced many 'sane' bikers to the D&D[®] game, so let's keep adventuring one big happy family, just in case you meet one at GamesFair.

Doug Cowie hasn't offered any guilt for his views, and nor shall we. IMAGINETM magazine's Art Supervisor is a biker and we know he's a psychopath...

Club News

Maidstone gamers should definitely try to get more friendly with the landlord of the Rose & Crown, High Street, West Malling. He, his wife, three cats and someone called Ken Hay are trying to run a face-to-face Diplomacy campaign, plus D&D games in the pub! It sells real ale too.

In fact Kent is obviously a hot bed of gaming activity. The Community Centre, Idonia Street, **Deptford**, is where the Deptford Adult Games Group meet on the first and third Sunday of every month at 3pm. Interested in a game of Creature Castle, or Wooden Ships and Iron Men? Contact the chairman, Kendall Johns.

Apparently our information on the **Scarborough** Wargames Society was out of date in #2. If Saturdays at the Technical College interests you, John Hinchcliffe has moved to 5 Futurist Buildings, Fore-shore Road, Scarborough.

The University College of North Wales Wargames and Role-playing Games meets every Friday and Sunday during term times in members rooms in **Bangor**. 'We will play anything.' Contact the Secretary, Dave Baynham, The Students' Unions, Deiniol Road, Bangor, Gwynedd.

There's also a club in **Preston**. The Dark Crypt Gaming Club plays AD&DTM, D&D, Runequest, Traveller and Car Wars games. It meets at members' houses, 2-7pm on Saturdays; interested parties should contact Peter Thompson, 60 Beechwood Avenue, Fulwood, Preston.

Last up for this issue, the **South Bucks** FRP Group, meets 7-11pm on alternate Tuesdays, and 11am onwards one Sunday every month. Contact Hartley Patterson, 10 Waterside, Wooburn Green, Bucks. for details.

'Zine Poll '83

Mad Policy is running its traditional Zine Poll again this year. Richard Walkerdine is inviting regular readers of postal games fanzines to vote for their favourites. The rules are as follows:

1. **Eligibility:** Any European zine which is an amateur publication concerned with postal games playing and which has published at least two issues since January 1st 1983.
2. **Voters:** To vote for a zine a voter must read it regularly. A voter must vote for at least two zines. Husbands, wives, girl- and boyfriends may not vote for their partner's zine. Editors, co-editors, sub-zine editors etc may not vote for their own zine.
3. **Voting Method:** Votes should be given to each zine in the range 1 (low) to 10 (high) to one decimal place.

4. **Assessment:** Results will be calculated by a preference matrix. The average votes method will also be shown, for reference only.
5. **Inclusion:** A zine must receive votes from at least 8% of the voters in order to be included in the results.
6. **Deadline:** Thursday, July 28th, '83.
7. **Results:** Will be published in **Mad Policy 87** in early August. Voters who don't receive MP can have a copy of the results if they send some stamps and a large self-addressed envelope to Richard.

The address for all this is Zine Poll, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, SURREY GU2 6PG. So forget about all that election rubbish, there are now much greater issues to be decided!

Next issue:

A special Celtic edition of IMAGINETM magazine!

- ★ The Taking of Siandabhair, by Graeme Davis, an AD&DTM adventure with a Celtic feel.
- ★ Druids — who were they? how close was the real thing to the portrayal in the AD&D game? how can you get more out of the class?
- ★ Lore, Lay & Legend, stories from the Celtic mythos.

and a host of our usual goodies — PAN, the Imagination Machine, Tavern Talk, the Sword of Alabron, Books, News and Reviews.

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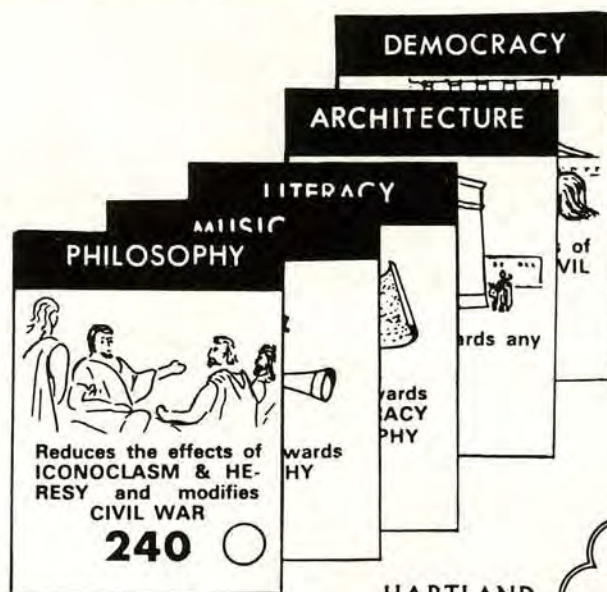
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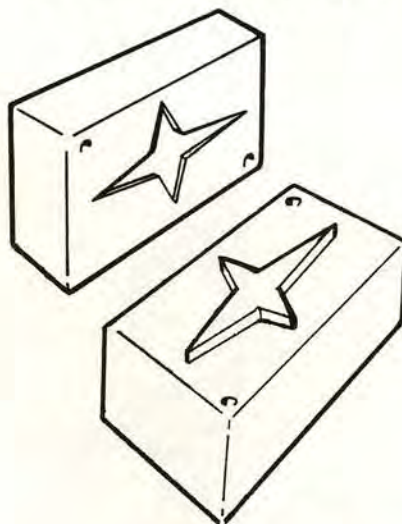
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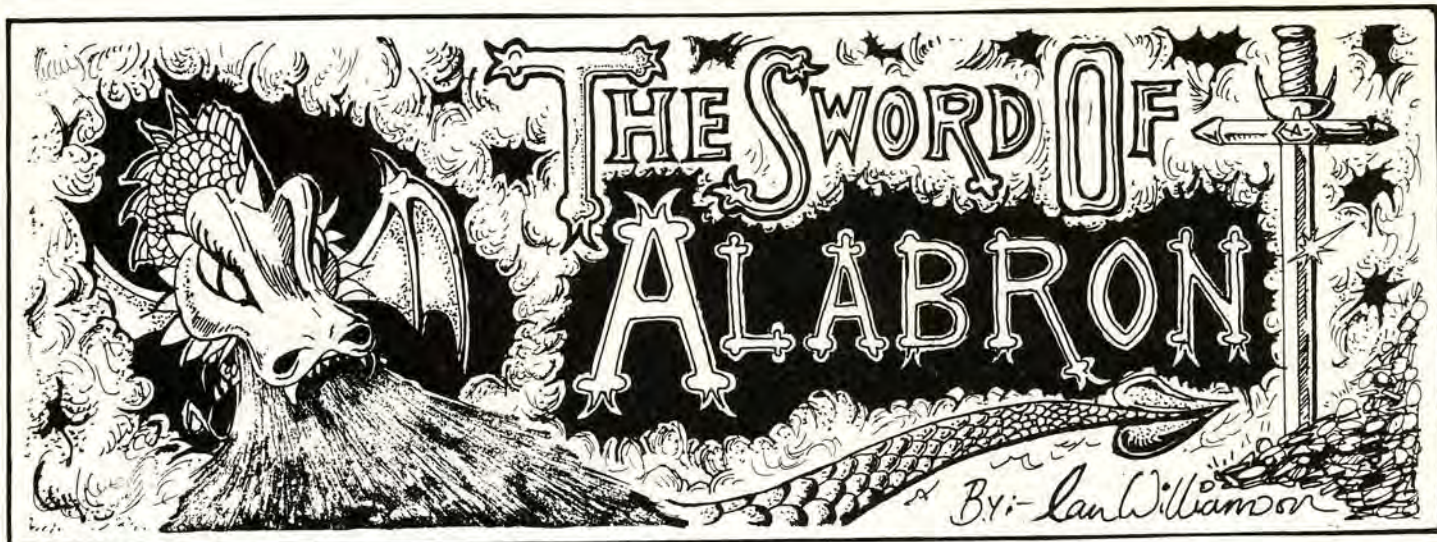
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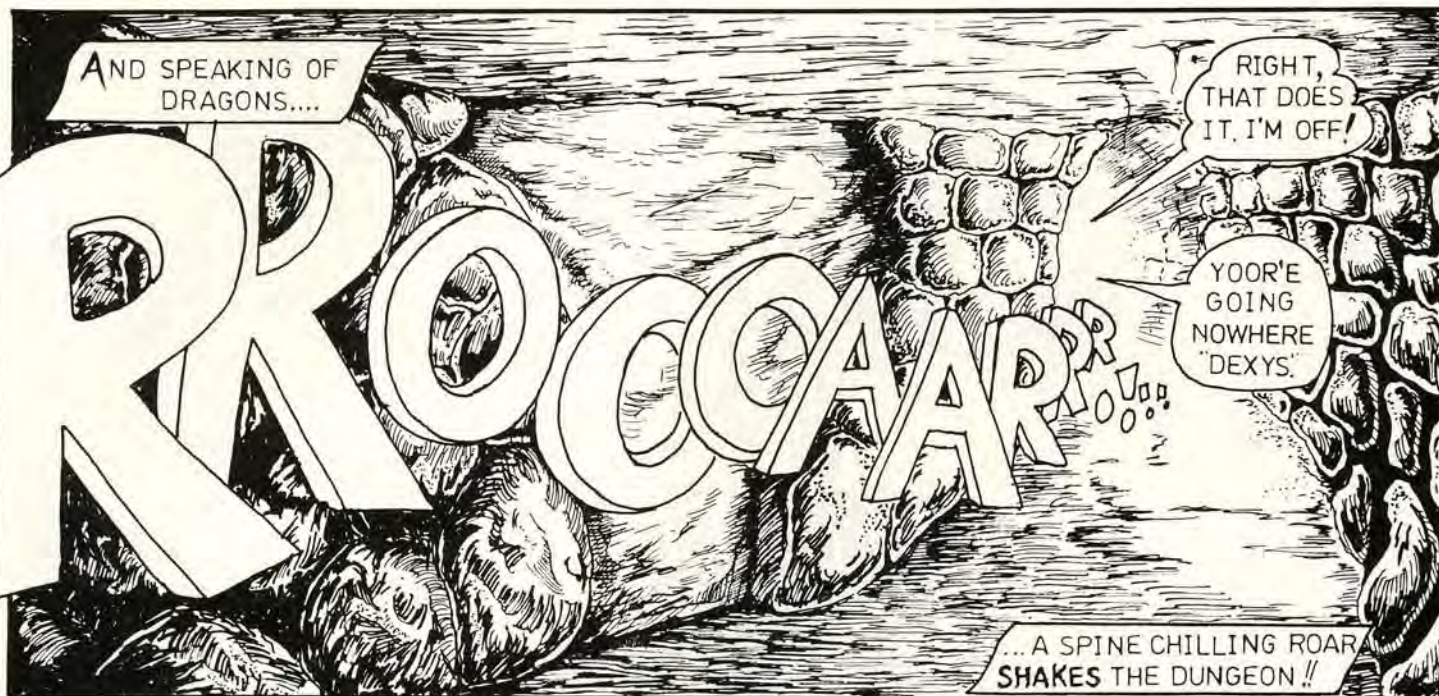
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"DEXYS."

...A SPINE CHILLING ROAR
SHAKES THE DUNGEON!!



NIGHTSWIFT TRIES TO RESTORE CALM.

SNOWDEMON IS
AN ICE-DRAGON.
HE THRIVES ON
COLD, AND I, FOR
ONE, **DO NOT**
BELIEVE WE'RE
ANYWHERE NEAR
HIS LAIR.

BUT DIDN'T
THAT REFER TO
THE **OTHER**
DRAGON?



HOW THE KRELL DO I KNOW?
DO YOU EXPECT ME TO HAVE
A QUILL AND PARCHMENT
READY EVERY TIME A
MAGIC MOUTH GOES OFF?!!

WELL PLAYERS
SEEM TO GET
AWAY WITH IT.



TALKING OF WHICH..
WHO'S **MAPPING**?

MY DEAR
NIGHTSWIFT,
I.... AM A
FIGHTER.

(er) I'D REALLY
LOVE TO MAP..
BUT(er) MY
BACK KEEPS
PLAYING UP
AND... (er)..
AUCHTER?



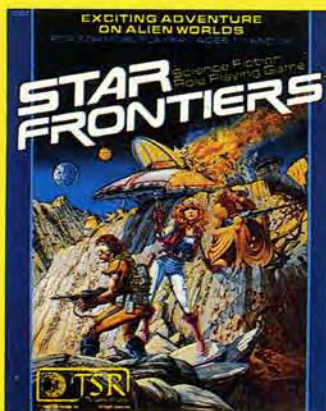
...ARM NO' MAPPIN'.
IT'S BORING! AND
I CANNEE SPELL
SO THERE!

LOOK, CAN WE
JUST RESTORE
SOME... **AUCHTER!**
STOP PLAYING WITH
THAT **FIRESTONE**
AND PAY ATTENTION.

ACH! SHUT
UP WIZARD



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